ACADEMY CLASSICS

HAMLET

SHAKESPEARE

ALLYN AND BACON

HAMLET
EDWIN BOOTH

To be, or not to be: that is the question.

— Act III. Scene 1.

The Academy Classics

SHAKESPEARE

HAMLET

EDITED WITH A LIFE OF SHAKESPEARE, AN ACCOUNT OF THE THEATRE IN HIS TIME, AND NUMEROUS AIDS TO THE STUDY OF THE PLAY

BY

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ALLYN AND BACON

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FOREWORD

In revising the edition of "Hamlet" published by Samuel Thurber in 1897, the editors have been influenced by changed conditions of English teaching in high schools since his work was done. The number of pupils has enormously increased and as a consequence reference material has become inadequate to the demand, literary preparation has grown to be more general and less specialized, while boys and girls of the present day have broader aims and ideals. These conditions call for a different type of annotation from that of twenty-five years ago.

Recent problems arising from the study of "Hamlet" with college preparatory, commercial, and technical classes, have led to the inclusion in the present edition of certain features not to be found in the original work. It has been the aim of the editors to provide such equipment as may make possible a thorough study of the play even in cases where libraries are restricted or not accessible. Among the new features thus provided are the following: fuller and more informational notes; a discussion of the sources of the play; a list of familiar quotations from "Hamlet"; an account of Shakespeare the man — his life, work, reputation — and the theatre for which he wrote; a list of practical, usable topics for oral and written composition; suggestions as to the acting of portions of Shakespeare's plays by boys and girls; and finally, a glossary for use in a rapid reading of the

tragedy. This new matter will be found in the appendix following the text of the play.

To the following firms we would express our thanks for courteous privileges extended in the use of copyrighted material: Messrs. Henry Holt and Company, selections from "Shakespeare's Workmanship," by Sir A. T. Quiller-Couch, and from "Ten More Plays of Shakespeare," by Professor Stopford Brooke; The Oxford University Press, a passage from Mr. G. S. Gordon's Introduction to his edition of "Hamlet."

It is hoped that this additional material will not only increase the interest of the student, but that it will also lighten the labor of the teacher.

SAMUEL THURBER, JR.
A. B. DE MILLE.

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SHAKESPEARE

WHAT needs my Shakespeare for his honored bones
The labor of an age in piléd stones?
Or that his hallowed reliques should be hid
Under a star-ypointing pyramid?
Dear son of memory, great heir of fame,
What need'st thou such weak witness of thy name?
Thou in our wonder and astonishment
Hast built thyself a live-long monument.
For whilst to the shame of slow-endeavoring art
Thy easy numbers flow, and that each heart
Hath from the leaves of thy unvalued book
Those Delphic lines with deep impression took,
Then thou, our fancy of itself bereaving,
Dost make us marble with too much conceiving;
And, so sepúlchred, in such pomp dost lie
That kings for such a tomb would wish to die.

JOHN MILTON.

HAMLET, PRINCE OF DENMARK.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

CLAUDIUS, king of Denmark.
HAMLET, son to the late, and nephew to the present king.
POLONIUS, lord chamberlain.
HORATIO, friend to Hamlet.
LAERTES, son to Polonius.
VOLTIMAND, CORNELIUS, ROSENCRANTZ, GUILDENSTERN, OSRIC, A Gentleman, } courtiers.
A Priest.
MARCELLUS, BERNARDO, } officers.
FRANCISCO, a soldier.
REYNALDO, servant to Polonius.
Players.
Two Clowns, Grave-diggers.
FORTINBRAS, prince of Norway.
A Captain.
English Ambassadors.
GERTRUDE, queen of Denmark, and mother to Hamlet.
OPHELIA, daughter to Polonius.
Lords, Ladies, Officers, Soldiers, Sailors, Messengers, and other Attendants.
Ghost of Hamlet's Father.

SCENE: *Denmark.*

Who's there?

— Act I. Scene 1.

ACT I.

SCENE I. *Elsinore. A platform before the castle.*

FRANCISCO *at his post. Enter to him* BERNARDO.

Ber. Who 's there?

Fran. Nay, answer me: stand, and unfold yourself.

Ber. Long live the king!

Fran. Bernardo?

Ber. He.

Fran. You come most carefully upon your hour.

Ber. 'T is now struck twelve; get thee to bed, Francisco.

Fran. For this relief much thanks: 't is bitter cold,
And I am sick at heart.

Ber. Have you had quiet guard?

Fran. Not a mouse stirring.

Ber. Well, good night.
If you do meet Horatio and Marcellus,
The rivals of my watch, bid them make haste.

Fran. I think I hear them. Stand, ho! Who 's there?

Enter HORATIO *and* MARCELLUS.

Hor. Friends to this ground.

Mar. And liegemen to the Dane.

Fran. Give you good night.

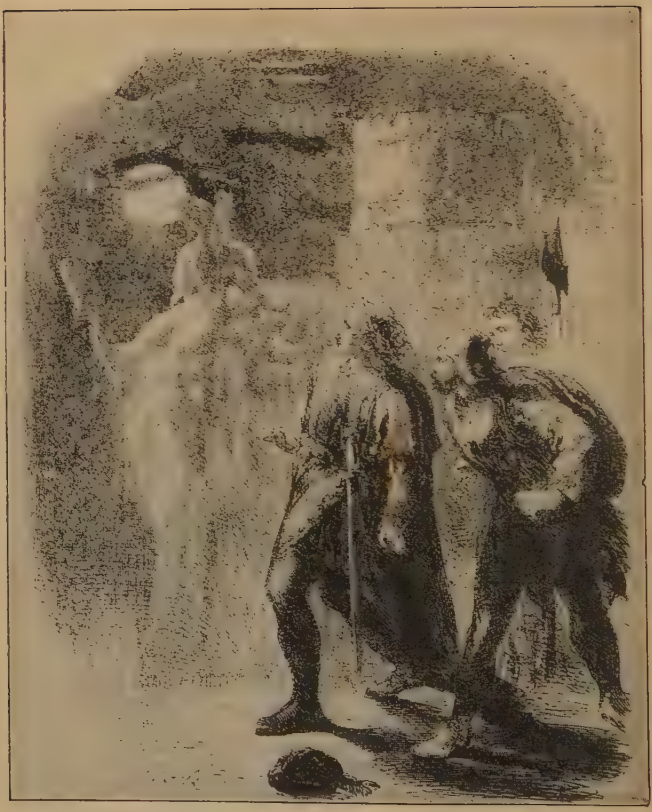
Mar. O, farewell, honest soldier:
Who hath relieved you?

Fran. Bernardo has my place.
Give you good night. [*Exit.*

Mar. Holla! Bernardo!
Ber. Say,
What, is Horatio there?
Hor. A piece of him.
Ber. Welcome, Horatio: welcome, good Marcellus.
Mar. What, has this thing appeared again to-night?
Ber. I have seen nothing.
Mar. Horatio says 't is but our fantasy,
And will not let belief take hold of him
Touching this dreaded sight, twice seen of us:
Therefore I have entreated him along
With us to watch the minutes of this night;
That if again this apparition come,
He may approve our eyes and speak to it.
Hor. Tush, tush, 't will not appear.
Ber. Sit down awhile;
And let us once again assail your ears,
That are so fortified against our story
What we have two nights seen.
Hor. Well, sit we down,
And let us hear Bernardo speak of this.
Ber. Last night of all,
When yond same star that 's westward from the pole
Had made his course to illume that part of heaven
Where now it burns, Marcellus and myself,
The bell then beating one, —

Enter Ghost.

Mar. Peace, break thee off; look, where it comes again!
Ber. In the same figure, like the king that 's dead.



Thou art a scholar; speak to it, Horatio.

— Act I. Scene 1.

Mar. Thou art a scholar; speak to it, Horatio.
Ber. Looks it not like the king? mark it, Horatio.
Hor. Most like: it harrows me with fear and wonder.
Ber. It would be spoke to.
Mar. Question it, Horatio.
Hor. What art thou that usurp'st this time of night,
Together with that fair and warlike form
In which the majesty of buried Denmark
Did sometimes march? by heaven I charge thee, speak!
Mar. It is offended.
Ber. See, it stalks away!
Hor. Stay! speak, speak! I charge thee, speak!
[*Exit Ghost.*
Mar. 'T is gone, and will not answer.
Ber. How now, Horatio! you tremble and look pale:
Is not this something more than fantasy?
What think you on 't?
Hor. Before my God, I might not this believe
Without the sensible and true avouch
Of mine own eyes.
Mar. Is it not like the king?
Hor. As thou art to thyself:
Such was the very armor he had on
When he the ambitious Norway combated;
So frowned he once, when, in an angry parle,
He smote the sledded Polacks on the ice:
'T is strange.
Mar. Thus twice before, and jump at this dead hour,
With martial stalk hath he gone by our watch.
Hor. In what particular thought to work I know not:
But in the gross and scope of my opinion,

This bodes some strange eruption to our state.
Mar. Good now, sit down, and tell me he that knows
Why this same strict and most observant watch
So nightly toils the subject of the land,
And why such daily cast of brazen cannon,
And foreign mart for implements of war;
Why such impress of shipwrights, whose sore task
Does not divide the Sunday from the week;
What might be toward, that this sweaty haste
Doth make the night joint-laborer with the day
Who is 't that can inform me?
Hor. That can I;
At least, the whisper goes so. Our last king,
Whose image even but now appeared to us,
Was, as you know, by Fortinbras of Norway,
Thereto pricked on by a most emulate pride,
Dared to the combat; in which our valiant Hamlet —
For so this side of our known world esteemed him —
Did slay this Fortinbras; who, by a sealed compact,
Well ratified by law and heraldry,
Did forfeit, with his life, all those his lands
Which he stood seized of, to the conqueror:
Against the which, a moiety competent
Was gaged by our king; which had returned
To the inheritance of Fortinbras,
Had he been vanquisher; as, by the same covenant,
And carriage of the article designed,
His fell to Hamlet. Now, sir, young Fortinbras,
Of unimproved mettle hot and full,
Hath in the skirts of Norway here and there
Sharked up a list of lawless resolutes,

For food and diet, to some enterprise
That hath a stomach in 't; which is no other —
As it doth well appear unto our state —
But to recover of us, by strong hand
And terms compulsatory, those foresaid lands
So by his father lost: and this, I take it,
Is the main motive of our preparations,
The source of this our watch and the chief head
Of this post-haste and romage in the land.
Ber. I think it be no other but e'en so:
Well may it sort that this portentous figure
Comes armed through our watch; so like the king
That was and is the question of these wars.
Hor. A mote it is to trouble the mind's eye.
In the most high and palmy state of Rome,
A little ere the mightiest Julius fell,
The graves stood tenantless and the sheeted dead
Did squeak and gibber in the Roman streets:
As stars with trains of fire and dews of blood,
Disasters in the sun; and the moist star
Upon whose influence Neptune's empire stands
Was sick almost to doomsday with eclipse:
And even the like precurse of fierce events,
As harbingers preceding still the fates
And prologue to the omen coming on,
Have heaven and earth together demonstrated
Unto our climatures and countrymen. —
But soft, behold! lo, where it comes again!

Re-enter Ghost.

I'll cross it, though it blast me. Stay, illusion!

If thou hast any sound, or use of voice,
Speak to me:
If there be any good thing to be done,
That may to thee do ease and grace to me,
Speak to me: [*Cock crows.*
If thou art privy to thy country's fate,
Which, happily, foreknowing may avoid,
O, speak!
Or if thou hast uphoarded in thy life
Extorted treasure in the womb of earth,
For which, they say, you spirits oft walk in death,
Speak of it: stay, and speak! Stop it, Marcellus.

Mar. Shall I strike at it with my partisan?

Hor. Do, if it will not stand.

Ber. 'T is here!

Hor. 'T is here!

Mar. 'T is gone! [*Exit Ghost.*

We do it wrong, being so majestical,
To offer it the show of violence;
For it is, as the air, invulnerable,
And our vain blows malicious mockery.

Ber. It was about to speak, when the cock crew.

Hor. And then it started like a guilty thing
Upon a fearful summons. I have heard,
The cock, that is the trumpet to the morn,
Doth with his lofty and shrill-sounding throat
Awake the god of day; and, at his warning,
Whether in sea or fire, in earth or air,
The extravagant and erring spirit hies
To his confine: and of the truth herein
This present object made probation.

Mar. It faded on the crowing of the cock.
Some say that ever 'gainst that season comes
Wherein our Saviour's birth is celebrated,
The bird of dawning singeth all night long:
And then, they say, no spirit dares stir abroad;
The nights are wholesome; then no planets strike,
No fairy takes, nor witch hath power to charm,
So hallowed and so gracious is the time.
Hor. So have I heard and do in part believe it.
But, look, the morn, in russet mantle clad,
Walks o'er the dew of yon high eastern hill:
Break we our watch up; and by my advice,
Let us impart what we have seen to-night
Unto young Hamlet; for, upon my life,
This spirit, dumb to us, will speak to him.
Do you consent we shall acquaint him with it,
As needful in our loves, fitting our duty?
Mar. Let 's do 't, I pray; and I this morning know
Where we shall find him most conveniently. [*Exeunt.*

Scene II. *A room of state in the castle.*

Enter the King, Queen, Hamlet, Polonius, Laertes, Voltimand, Cornelius, Lords, *and* Attendants.

King. Though yet of Hamlet our dear brother's death
The memory be green, and that it us befitted
To bear our hearts in grief and our whole kingdom
To be contracted in one brow of woe,
Yet so far hath discretion fought with nature
That we with wisest sorrow think on him,
Together with remembrance of ourselves.

Therefore our sometime sister, now our queen,
The imperial jointress to this warlike state,
Have we, as 't were with a defeated joy, —
With one auspicious and one dropping eye,
With mirth in funeral and with dirge in marriage,
In equal scale weighing delight and dole, —
Taken to wife: nor have we herein barred
Your better wisdoms, which have freely gone
With this affair along. For all, our thanks.
Now follows, that you know, young Fortinbras,
Holding a weak supposal of our worth,
Or thinking by our late dear brother's death
Our state to be disjoint and out of frame,
Colleagued with the dream of his advantage,
He hath not failed to pester us with message,
Importing the surrender of those lands
Lost by his father, with all bonds of law,
To our most valiant brother. So much for him.
Now for ourself and for this time of meeting:
This much the business is: we have here writ
To Norway, uncle of young Fortinbras, —
Who, impotent and bed-rid, scarcely hears
Of this his nephew's purpose, — to suppress
His further gait herein; in that the levies,
The lists and full proportions, are all made
Out of his subject: and we here dispatch
You, good Cornelius, and you, Voltimand,
For bearers of this greeting to old Norway;
Giving to you no further personal power
To business with the king, more than the scope
Of these dilated articles allow.

Farewell, and let your haste commend your duty.

Cor. } In that and all things will we show our duty.
Vol. }

King. We doubt it nothing: heartily farewell.

[*Exeunt Voltimand and Cornelius.*

And now, Laertes, what 's the news with you?
You told us of some suit; what is 't, Laertes?
You cannot speak of reason to the Dane,
And lose your voice: what wouldst thou beg, Laertes,
That shall not be my offer, not thy asking?
The head is not more native to the heart,
The hand more instrumental to the mouth,
Than is the throne of Denmark to thy father.
What wouldst thou have, Laertes?

Laer. My dread lord,
Your leave and favor to return to France;
From whence though willingly I came to Denmark,
To show my duty in your coronation,
Yet now, I must confess, that duty done,
My thoughts and wishes bend again toward France
And bow them to your gracious leave and pardon.

King. Have you your father's leave? What says Polonius?

Pol. He hath, my lord, wrung from me my slow leave
By laborsome petition, and at last
Upon his will I sealed my hard consent:
I do beseech you, give him leave to go.

King. Take thy fair hour, Laertes; time be thine,
And thy best graces spend it at thy will!
But now, my cousin Hamlet, and my son, —

Ham. [*Aside*] A little more than kin, and less than kind.

King. How is it that the clouds still hang on you?

Ham. Not so, my lord; I am too much i' the sun.

Queen. Good Hamlet, cast thy nighted color off,
And let thine eye look like a friend on Denmark.
Do not forever with thy vailed lids
Seek for thy noble father in the dust:
Thou know'st 't is common: all that lives must die,
Passing through nature to eternity.

Ham. Ay, madam, it is common.

Queen. If it be,
Why seems it so particular with thee?

Ham. Seems, madam! nay, it is; I know not 'seems.'
'T is not alone my inky cloak, good mother,
Nor customary suits of solemn black,
Nor windy suspiration of forced breath,
No, nor the fruitful river in the eye,
Nor the dejected 'havior of the visage,
Together with all forms, moods, shows of grief,
That can denote me truly: these indeed seem,
For they are actions that a man might play:
But I have that within which passeth show;
These but the trappings and the suits of woe.

King. 'T is sweet and commendable in your nature, Hamlet,
To give these mourning duties to your father:
But, you must know, your father lost a father;
That father lost, lost his, and the survivor bound
In filial obligation for some term
To do obsequious sorrow: but to persever

But I have that within which passeth show;
These but the trappings and the suits of woe.

— Act I. Scene 2.

In obstinate condolement is a course
Of impious stubbornness; 't is unmanly grief;
It shows a will most incorrect to heaven,
A heart unfortified, a mind impatient,
An understanding simple and unschooled:
For what we know must be and is as common
As any the most vulgar thing to sense,
Why should we in our peevish opposition
Take it to heart? Fie! 't is a fault to heaven,
A fault against the dead, a fault to nature,
To reason most absurd; whose common theme
Is death of fathers, and who still hath cried,
From the first corse till he that died to-day,
'This must be so.' We pray you, throw to earth
This unprevailing woe, and think of us
As of a father: for let the world take note,
You are the most immediate to our throne;
And with no less nobility of love
Than that which dearest father bears his son,
Do I impart toward you. For your intent
In going back to school in Wittenberg,
It is most retrograde to our desire:
And we beseech you, bend you to remain
Here, in the cheer and comfort of our eye,
Our chiefest courtier, cousin, and our son.

Queen. Let not thy mother lose her prayers, Hamlet:
I pray thee, stay with us; go not to Wittenberg.

Ham. I shall in all my best obey you, madam.

King. Why, 't is a loving and a fair reply:
Be as ourself in Denmark. Madam, come;
This gentle and unforced accord of Hamlet

Sits smiling to my heart: in grace whereof,
No jocund health that Denmark drinks to-day,
But the great cannon to the clouds shall tell,
And the king's rouse the heavens shall bruit again,
Re-speaking earthly thunder. Come away.

[*Exeunt all but Hamlet.*

Ham. O, that this too too solid flesh would melt,
Thaw and resolve itself into a dew!
Or that the Everlasting had not fixed
His canon 'gainst self-slaughter! O God! God!
How weary, stale, flat and unprofitable,
Seem to me all the uses of this world!
Fie on 't! ah fie! 't is an unweeded garden,
That grows to seed; things rank and gross in nature
Possess it merely. That it should come to this!
But two months dead: nay, not so much, not two:
So excellent a king; that was, to this,
Hyperion to a satyr; so loving to my mother
That he might not beteem the winds of heaven
Visit her face too roughly. Heaven and earth!
Must I remember? why, she would hang on him,
As if increase of appetite had grown
By what it fed on: and yet, within a month —
Let me not think on 't — Frailty, thy name is woman! —
A little month, or ere those shoes were old
With which she followed my poor father's body,
Like Niobe, all tears: — why she, even she —
O God! a beast, that wants discourse of reason,
Would have mourned longer — married with my uncle,
My father's brother, but no more like my father
Than I to Hercules: within a month:

Ere yet the salt of most unrighteous tears
Had left the flushing in her galled eyes,
She married. O, most wicked speed!
It is not nor it cannot come to good:
But break my heart; for I must hold my tongue.

Enter HORATIO, MARCELLUS, *and* BERNARDO.

Hor. Hail to your lordship!
Ham. I am glad to see you well:
Horatio, — or do I forget myself.
Hor. The same, my lord, and your poor servant ever.
Ham. Sir, my good friend; I'll change that name with you:
And what make you from Wittenberg, Horatio?
Marcellus?
Mar. My good lord —
Ham. I am very glad to see you. Good even, sir.
But what, in faith, make you from Wittenberg?
Hor. A truant disposition, good my lord.
Ham. I would not hear your enemy say so,
Nor shall you do mine ear that violence,
To make it truster of your own report
Against yourself: I know you are no truant.
But what is your affair in Elsinore?
We 'll teach you to drink deep ere you depart.
Hor. My lord, I came to see your father's funeral.
Ham. I pray thee, do not mock me, fellow-student;
I think it was to see my mother's wedding.
Hor. Indeed, my lord, it followed hard upon.
Ham. Thrift, thrift, Horatio! the funeral baked meats

Did coldly furnish forth the marriage tables.
Would I had met my dearest foe in heaven
Or ever I had seen that day, Horatio!
My father! — methinks I see my father.
Hor. Where, my lord?
Ham. In my mind's eye, Horatio.
Hor. I saw him once; he was a goodly king.
Ham. He was a man, take him for all in all,
I shall not look upon his like again.
Hor. My lord, I think I saw him yesternight.
Ham. Saw? who?
Hor. My lord, the king, your father.
Ham. The king my father!
Hor. Season your admiration for a while
With an attent ear, till I may deliver,
Upon the witness of these gentlemen,
This marvel to you.
Ham. For God's love, let me hear.
Hor. Two nights together had these gentlemen,
Marcellus and Bernardo, on their watch,
In the dead vast and middle of the night,
Been thus encountered. A figure like your father,
Armed at point exactly, cap-a-pe,
Appears before them, and with solemn march
Goes slow and stately by them: thrice he walked
By their oppressed and fear-surprised eyes,
Within his truncheon's length; whilst they, distilled
Almost to jelly with the act of fear,
Stand dumb and speak not to him. This to me
In dreadful secrecy impart they did;
And I with them the third night kept the watch:

Where, as they had delivered, both in time,
Form of the thing, each word made true and good,
The apparition comes: I knew your father;
These hands are not more like.

Ham. But where was this?

Mar. My lord, upon the platform where we watched.

Ham. Did you not speak to it?

Hor. My lord, I did;
But answer made it none: yet once methought
It lifted up its head and did address
Itself to motion, like as it would speak;
But even then the morning cock crew loud,
And at the sound it shrunk in haste away,
And vanished from our sight.

Ham. 'T is very strange.

Hor. As I do live, my honored lord, 't is true;
And we did think it writ down in our duty
To let you know of it.

Ham. Indeed, indeed, sirs, but this troubles me.
Hold you the watch to-night?

Mar. } We do, my lord.
Ber. }

Ham. Armed, say you?

Mar. } Armed, my lord.
Ber. }

Ham. From top to toe?

Mar. } My lord, from head to foot.
Ber. }

Ham. Then saw you not his face?

Hor. O, yes, my lord; he wore his beaver up.

Ham. What, looked he frowningly?
Hor. A countenance more in sorrow than in anger.
Ham. Pale or red?
Hor. Nay, very pale.
Ham. And fixed his eyes upon you?
Hor. Most constantly.
Ham. I would I had been there.
Hor. It would have much amazed you.
Ham. Very like, very like. Stayed it long?
Hor. While one with moderate haste might tell a hundred.
Mar. *Ber.* Longer, longer.
Hor. Not when I saw 't.
Ham. His beard was grizzled, — no?
Hor. It was, as I have seen it in his life,
A sable silvered.
Ham. I will watch to-night;
Perchance 't will walk again.
Hor. I warrant it will.
Ham. If it assume my noble father's person,
I 'll speak to it though hell itself should gape
And bid me hold my peace. I pray you all,
If you have hitherto concealed this sight,
Let it be tenable in your silence still;
And whatsoever else shall hap to-night,
Give it an understanding, but no tongue:
I will requite your loves. So, fare you well:
Upon the platform, 'twixt eleven and twelve,
I 'll visit you.
All. Our duty to your honor.

Ham. Your loves, as mine to you: farewell.

[*Exeunt all but Hamlet.*

My father's spirit in arms! all is not well;
I doubt some foul play: would the night were come!
Till then sit still, my soul: foul deeds will rise,
Though all the earth o'erwhelm them, to men's eyes.

[*Exit.*

Scene III. *A room in Polonius' house.*

Enter Laertes *and* Ophelia.

Laer. My necessaries are embarked: farewell:
And, sister, as the winds give benefit
And convoy is assistant, do not sleep,
But let me hear from you.

Oph. Do you doubt that?

Laer. For Hamlet and the trifling of his favor,
Hold it a fashion and a toy in blood,
A violet in the youth of primy nature,
Forward, not permanent, sweet, not lasting,
The perfume and suppliance of a minute;
No more.

Oph. No more but so?

Laer. Think it no more:
For nature, crescent, does not grow alone
In thews and bulk, but, as this temple waxes,
The inward service of the mind and soul
Grows wide withal. Perhaps he loves you now,
And now no soil nor cautel doth besmirch
The virtue of his will: but you must fear,
His greatness weighed, his will is not his own;
For he himself is subject to his birth:

He may not, as unvalued persons do,
Carve for himself; for on his choice depends
The safety and the health of this whole state;
And therefore must his choice be circumscribed
Unto the voice and yielding of that body
Whereof he is the head. Then if he says he loves you,
It fits your wisdom so far to believe it
As he in his particular act and place
May give his saying deed; which is no further
Than the main voice of Denmark goes withal.
Then weigh what loss your honor may sustain,
If with too credent ear you list his songs,
Or lose your heart, or your chaste treasure open
To his unmastered importunity.
Fear it, Ophelia, fear it, my dear sister,
And keep you in the rear of your affection,
Out of the shot and danger of desire.
The chariest maid is prodigal enough,
If she unmask her beauty to the moon:
Virtue itself 'scapes not calumnious strokes:
The canker galls the infants of the spring,
Too oft before their buttons be disclosed,
And in the morn and liquid dew of youth
Contagious blastments are most imminent.
Be wary then; best safety lies in fear:
Youth to itself rebels, though none else near.
Oph. I shall the effect of this good lesson keep,
A watchman to my heart. But, good my brother,
Do not, as some ungracious pastors do,
Show me the steep and thorny way to heaven;
Whiles, like a puffed and reckless libertine,

Himself the primrose path of dalliance treads,
And recks not his own rede.
Laer. O, fear me not.
I stay too long: but here my father comes.

Enter POLONIUS.

A double blessing is a double grace;
Occasion smiles upon a second leave.
Pol. Yet here, Laertes! aboard, aboard, for shame!
The wind sits in the shoulder of your sail,
And you are stayed for. There; my blessing with thee!
And these few precepts in thy memory
See thou character. Give thy thoughts no tongue,
Nor any unproportioned thought his act.
Be thou familiar, but by no means vulgar.
Those friends thou hast, and their adoption tried,
Grapple them to thy soul with hoops of steel;
But do not dull thy palm with entertainment
Of each new-hatched, unfledged comrade. Beware
Of entrance to a quarrel, but being in,
Bear 't that the opposed may beware of thee.
Give every man thine ear, but few thy voice;
Take each man's censure, but reserve thy judgment.
Costly thy habit as thy purse can buy,
But not expressed in fancy; rich, not gaudy;
For the apparel oft proclaims the man,
And they in France of the best rank and station
Are most select and generous in that.
Neither a borrower nor a lender be;
For loan oft loses both itself and friend,

And borrowing dulls the edge of husbandry.
This above all: to thine own self be true,
And it must follow, as the night the day,
Thou canst not then be false to any man.
Farewell: my blessing season this in thee!

Laer. Most humbly do I take my leave, my lord.

Pol. The time invites you; go; your servants tend.

Laer. Farewell, Ophelia; and remember well
What I have said to you.

Oph. 'T is in my memory locked,
And you yourself shall keep the key of it.

Laer. Farewell. [*Exit.*

Pol. What is 't, Ophelia, he hath said to you?

Oph. So please you, something touching the Lord Hamlet.

Pol. Marry, well bethought:
'T is told me, he hath very oft of late
Given private time to you; and you yourself
Have of your audience been most free and bounteous:
If it be so, as so 't is put on me,
And that in way of caution, I must tell you,
You do not understand yourself so clearly
As it behoves my daughter and your honor.
What is between you? give me up the truth.

Oph. He hath, my lord, of late made many tenders
Of his affection to me.

Pol. Affection! pooh! you speak like a green girl,
Unsifted in such perilous circumstance.
Do you believe his tenders, as you call them?

Oph. I do not know, my lord, what I should think.

Pol. Marry, I 'll teach you: think yourself a baby;

That you have ta'en these tenders for true pay,
Which are not sterling. Tender yourself more dearly;
Or — not to crack the wind of the poor phrase,
Running it thus — you 'll tender me a fool.
Oph. My lord, he hath importuned me with love
In honorable fashion.
Pol. Ay, fashion you may call it; go to, go to.
Oph. And hath given countenance to his speech, my lord,
With almost all the holy vows of heaven.
Pol. Ay, springes to catch woodcocks. I do know,
When the blood burns, how prodigal the soul
Lends the tongue vows: these blazes, daughter,
Giving more light than heat, extinct in both,
Even in their promise, as it is a-making,
You must not take for fire. From this time
Be somewhat scanter of your maiden presence;
Set your entreatments at a higher rate
Than a command to parley. For Lord Hamlet,
Believe so much in him, that he is young,
And with a larger tether may he walk
Than may be given you: in few, Ophelia,
Do not believe his vows; for they are brokers,
Not of that dye which their investments show,
But mere implorators of unholy suits,
The better to beguile. This is for all:
I would not, in plain terms, from this time forth,
Have you so slander any moment's leisure,
As to give words or talk with the Lord Hamlet.
Look to 't, I charge you: come your ways.
Oph. I shall obey, my lord. [*Exeunt.*

Scene IV. *The platform.*

Enter Hamlet, Horatio, *and* Marcellus.

Ham. The air bites shrewdly; it is very cold.
Hor. It is a nipping and an eager air.
Ham. What hour now?
Hor. I think it lacks of twelve.
Ham. No, it is struck.
Hor. Indeed? I heard it not: then it draws near the season
Wherein the spirit held his wont to walk.
[*A flourish of trumpets, and ordnance shot off, within.*
What does this mean, my lord?
Ham. The king doth wake to-night and takes his rouse,
Keeps wassail, and the swaggering up-spring reels;
And, as he drains his draughts of Rhenish down,
The kettle-drum and trumpet thus bray out
The triumph of his pledge.
Hor. Is it a custom?
Ham. Ay, marry, is 't:
But to my mind, though I am native here
And to the manner born, it is a custom
More honored in the breach than the observance.
This heavy-headed revel east and west
Makes us traduced and taxed of other nations:
They clepe us drunkards, and with swinish phrase
Soil our addition; and indeed it takes
From our achievements, though performed at height,
The pith and marrow of our attribute.
So, oft it chances in particular men,
That for some vicious mole of nature in them,

The air bites shrewdly; it is very cold.

— Act I. Scene 4.

As, in their birth — wherein they are not guilty,
Since nature cannot choose his origin —
By the o'ergrowth of some complexion,
Oft breaking down the pales and forts of reason,
Or by some habit that too much o'er-leavens
The form of plausive manners, that these men,
Carrying, I say, the stamp of one defect,
Being nature's livery, or fortune's star, —
Their virtues else — be they as pure as grace,
As infinite as man may undergo —
Shall in the general censure take corruption
From that particular fault: the dram of eale
Doth all the noble substance of a doubt
To his own scandal.

Hor. Look, my lord, it comes!

Enter Ghost.

Ham. Angels and ministers of grace defend us!
Be thou a spirit of health or goblin damned,
Bring with thee airs from heaven or blasts from hell,
Be thy intents wicked or charitable,
Thou comest in such a questionable shape
That I will speak to thee: I 'll call thee Hamlet,
King, father, royal Dane: O, answer me!
Let me not burst in ignorance; but tell
Why thy canonized bones, hearsed in death,
Have burst their cerements; why the sepulchre,
Wherein we saw thee quietly inurned,
Hath oped his ponderous and marble jaws,
To cast thee up again. What may this mean,
That thou, dead corse, again in complete steel

Revisit'st thus the glimpses of the moon,
Making night hideous; and we fools of nature
So horridly to shake our disposition
With thoughts beyond the reaches of our souls?
Say, why is this? wherefore? what should we do?

[*Ghost beckons Hamlet.*

Hor. It beckons you to go away with it,
As if it some impartment did desire
To you alone.

Mar. Look, with what courteous action
It waves you to a more removed ground:
But do not go with it.

Hor. No, by no means.

Ham. It will not speak; then I will follow it.

Hor. Do not, my lord.

Ham. Why, what should be the fear?
I do not set my life at a pin's fee;
And for my soul, what can it do to that,
Being a thing immortal as itself?
It waves me forth again: I 'll follow it.

Hor. What if it tempt you toward the flood, my lord,
Or to the dreadful summit of the cliff
That beetles o'er his base into the sea,
And there assume some other horrible form,
Which might deprive your sovereignty of reason
And draw you into madness? think of it:
The very place puts toys of desperation,
Without more motive, into every brain
That looks so many fathoms to the sea
And hears it roar beneath.

Ham. It waves me still.

Go on; I 'll follow thee.

Mar. You shall not go, my lord.

Ham. Hold off your hands.

Hor. Be ruled; you shall not go.

Ham. My fate cries out,
And makes each petty artery in this body
As hardy as the Nemean lion's nerve.
Still am I called. Unhand me, gentlemen.
By heaven, I 'll make a ghost of him that lets me!
I say, away! Go on: I 'll follow thee.

[*Exeunt Ghost and Hamlet.*

Hor. He waxes desperate with imagination.

Mar. Let 's follow: 't is not fit thus to obey him.

Hor. Have after. To what issue will this come?

Mar. Something is rotten in the state of Denmark.

Hor. Heaven will direct it.

Mar. Nay, let 's follow him. [*Exeunt.*

Scene V. *Another part of the platform.*

Enter Ghost *and* Hamlet.

Ham. Where wilt thou lead me? speak; I 'll go no further.

Ghost. Mark me.

Ham. I will.

Ghost. My hour is almost come
When I to sulphurous and tormenting flames
Must render up myself.

Ham. Alas, poor ghost!

Ghost. Pity me not, but lend thy serious hearing
To what I shall unfold.

Ham. Speak; I am bound to hear.

Ghost. So art thou to revenge, when thou shalt hear.
Ham. What?
Ghost. I am thy father's spirit,
Doomed for a certain term to walk the night,
And for the day confined to fast in fires,
Till the foul crimes done in my days of nature
Are burnt and purged away. But that I am forbid
To tell the secrets of my prison-house,
I could a tale unfold whose lightest word
Would harrow up thy soul, freeze thy young blood,
Make thy two eyes, like stars, start from their spheres,
Thy knotted and combined locks to part
And each particular hair to stand an end,
Like quills upon the fretful porpentine:
But this eternal blazon must not be
To ears of flesh and blood. List, list, O, list!
If thou didst ever thy dear father love —
Ham. O God!
Ghost. Revenge his foul and most unnatural murder.
Ham. Murder!
Ghost. Murder most foul, as in the best it is;
But this most foul, strange and unnatural.
Ham. Haste me to know 't, that I, with wings as swift
As meditation or the thoughts of love,
May sweep to my revenge.
Ghost. I find thee apt;
And duller shouldst thou be than the fat weed
That roots itself in ease on Lethe wharf,
Wouldst thou not stir in this. Now, Hamlet, hear:
'T is given out that, sleeping in my orchard,
A serpent stung me; so the whole ear of Denmark

Is by a forged process of my death
Rankly abused: but know, thou noble youth,
The serpent that did sting thy father's life
Now wears his crown.
Ham. O my prophetic soul!
My uncle!
Ghost. Ay, that licentious, that adulterate beast,
With witchcraft of his wit, with traitorous gifts, —
O wicked wit and gifts, that have the power
So to seduce! — won to his shameful lust
The will of my most seeming-virtuous queen:
O Hamlet, what a falling-off was there!
From me, whose love was of that dignity
That it went hand in hand even with the vow
I made to her in marriage, and to decline
Upon a wretch whose natural gifts were poor
To those of mine!
But virtue, as it never will be moved,
Though lewdness court it in a shape of heaven,
So lust, though to a radiant angel linked,
Will sate itself in a celestial bed,
And prey on garbage.
But, soft! methinks I scent the morning air;
Brief let me be. Sleeping within my orchard,
My custom always in the afternoon,
Upon my secure hour thy uncle stole,
With juice of cursed hebenon in a vial,
And in the porches of my ears did pour
The leperous distilment; whose effect
Holds such an enmity with blood of man
That swift as quicksilver it courses through

The natural gates and alleys of the body,
And with a sudden vigor it doth posset
And curd, like eager droppings into milk,
The thin and wholesome blood: so did it mine;
And a most instant tetter barked about,
Most lazar-like, with vile and loathsome crust,
All my smooth body.
Thus was I, sleeping, by a brother's hand
Of life, of crown, of queen, at once dispatched:
Cut off even in the blossoms of my sin,
Unhouseled, disappointed, unaneled,
No reckoning made, but sent to my account
With all my imperfections on my head:
O, horrible! O, horrible! most horrible!
If thou hast nature in thee, bear it not;
But, howsoever thou pursuest this act,
Taint not thy mind, nor let thy soul contrive
Against thy mother aught: leave her to heaven
And to those thorns that in her bosom lodge,
To prick and sting her. Fare thee well at once!
The glow-worm shows the matin to be near,
And 'gins to pale his uneffectual fire:
Adieu, adieu! Hamlet, remember me. [*Exit.*

Ham. O all you host of heaven! O earth! what else?
And shall I couple hell? O, fie! Hold, hold, my heart;
And you, my sinews, grow not instant old,
But bear me stiffly up. Remember thee!
Ay, thou poor ghost, while memory holds a seat
In this distracted globe. Remember thee!
Yea, from the table of my memory
I 'll wipe away all trivial fond records,

Sent to my account
With all my imperfections on my head.

— Act I. Scene 5.

All saws of books, all forms, all pressures past,
That youth and observation copied there;
And thy commandment all alone shall live
Within the book and volume of my brain,
Unmixed with baser matter: yes, by heaven!
O most pernicious woman!
O villain, villain, smiling, damned villain!
My tables, — meet it is I set it down,
That one may smile, and smile, and be a villain;
At least I 'm sure it may be so in Denmark: [*Writing.*
So, uncle, there you are. Now to my word;
It is 'Adieu, adieu! remember me.'
I have sworn 't.

Mar. } [*Within*] My lord, my lord, —
Hor. }

Mar. [*Within*] Lord Hamlet, —
Hor. [*Within*] Heaven secure him!
Ham. So be it!
Hor. [*Within*] Hillo, ho, ho, my lord!
Ham. Hillo, ho, ho, boy! come, bird, come.

Enter HORATIO *and* MARCELLUS.

Mar. How is 't, my noble lord?
Hor. What news, my lord?
Ham. O, wonderful!
Hor. Good my lord, tell it.
Ham. No; you 'll reveal it.
Hor. Not I, my lord, by heaven.
Mar. Nor I, my lord.
Ham. How say you, then; would heart of man once think it?

But you 'll be secret?

Hor. } Ay, by heaven, my lord.
Mar. }

Ham. There 's ne'er a villain dwelling in all Denmark
But he 's an arrant knave.

Hor. There needs no ghost, my lord, come from the grave
To tell us this.

Ham. Why, right; you are i' the right;
And so, without more circumstance at all,
I hold it fit that we shake hands and part:
You, as your business and desire shall point you;
For every man has business and desire,
Such as it is; and for mine own poor part,
Look you, I 'll go pray.

Hor. These are but wild and whirling words, my lord.

Ham. I'm sorry they offend you, heartily;
Yes, 'faith, heartily.

Hor. There 's no offence, my lord.

Ham. Yes, by Saint Patrick, but there is, Horatio,
And much offence too. Touching this vision here,
It is an honest ghost, that let me tell you:
For your desire to know what is between us,
O'ermaster 't as you may. And now, good friends,
As you are friends, scholars and soldiers,
Give me one poor request.

Hor. What is 't, my lord? we will.

Ham. Never make known what you have seen to-night.

Hor. } My lord, we will not.
Mar. }

Ham. Nay, but swear 't,

Hor. In faith,
My lord, not I.
Mar. Nor I, my lord, in faith.
Ham. Upon my sword.
Mar. We have sworn, my lord, already.
Ham. Indeed, upon my sword, indeed.
Ghost. [*Beneath*] Swear.
Ham. Ah, ha, boy! say'st thou so? art thou there, truepenny?
Come on — you hear this fellow in the cellarage —
Consent to swear.
Hor. Propose the oath, my lord.
Ham. Never to speak of this that you have seen,
Swear by my sword.
Ghost. [*Beneath*] Swear.
Ham. Hic et ubique? then we 'll shift our ground.
Come hither, gentlemen,
And lay your hands again upon my sword:
Never to speak of this that you have heard,
Swear by my sword.
Ghost. [*Beneath*] Swear.
Ham. Well said, old mole! canst work i' the earth so fast?
A worthy pioner! Once more remove, good friends.
Hor. O day and night, but this is wondrous strange!
Ham. And therefore as a stranger give it welcome.
There are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio,
Than are dreamt of in your philosophy.
But come;
Here, as before, never, so help you mercy,
How strange or odd soe'er I bear myself,

As I perchance hereafter shall think meet
To put an antic disposition on,
That you, at such times seeing me, never shall,
With arms encumbered thus, or this head-shake,
Or by pronouncing of some doubtful phrase,
As 'Well, well, we know,' or, 'We could, an if we would,'
Or 'If we list to speak', or 'There be, an if they might,'
Or such ambiguous giving out, to note
That you know aught of me: this not to do,
So grace and mercy at your most need help you,
Swear.

Ghost. [*Beneath*] Swear.

Ham. Rest, rest, perturbed spirit! [*They swear.*] So, gentlemen,
With all my love I do commend me to you:
And what so poor a man as Hamlet is
May do, to express his love and friending to you,
God willing, shall not lack. Let us go in together;
And still your fingers on your lips, I pray.
The time is out of joint: O cursed spite,
That ever I was born to set it right!
Nay, come, let 's go together. [*Exeunt.*

ACT II.

SCENE I. *A room in Polonius' house.*

Enter POLONIUS *and* REYNALDO.

Pol. Give him this money and these notes, Reynaldo.
Rey. I will, my lord.
Pol. You shall do marvellous wisely, good Reynaldo,

Before you visit him, to make inquire
Of his behavior.
Rey. My lord, I did intend it.
Pol. Marry, well said; very well said. Look you, sir,
Inquire me first what Danskers are in Paris;
And how, and who, what means, and where they keep,
What company, at what expense; and finding
By this encompassment and drift of question
That they do know my son, come you more nearer
Than your particular demands will touch it:
Take you, as 't were, some distant knowledge of him;
As thus, 'I know his father and his friends,
And in part him:' do you mark this, Reynaldo?
Rey. Ay, very well, my lord.
Pol. 'And in part him; but' you may say 'not well:
But, if 't be he I mean, he 's very wild;
Addicted so and so:' and there put on him
What forgeries you please; marry, none so rank
As may dishonor him; take heed of that;
But, sir, such wanton, wild and usual slips
As are companions noted and most known
To youth and liberty.
Rey. As gaming, my lord.
Pol. Ay, or drinking, fencing, swearing, quarrelling,
You may go so far.
Rey. My lord, that would dishonor him.
Pol. 'Faith, no; as you may season it in the charge.
You must not put another scandal on him,
That he is open to incontinency;
That 's not my meaning: but breathe his faults so quaintly
That they may seem the taints of liberty,

The flash and outbreak of a fiery mind,
A savageness in unreclaimed blood,
Of general assault.
Rey. But, my good lord, —
Pol. Wherefore should you do this?
Rey. Ay, my lord,
I would know that.
Pol. Marry, sir, here 's my drift;
And, I believe, it is a fetch of warrant:
You laying these slight sullies on my son,
As 't were a thing a little soiled i' the working,
Mark you,
Your party in converse, him you would sound,
Having ever seen in the prenominate crimes
The youth you breathe of guilty, be assured
He closes with you in this consequence;
'Good sir,' or so, or 'friend,' or 'gentleman,'
According to the phrase or the addition
Of man and country.
Rey. Very good, my lord.
Pol. And then, sir, does he this — he does — what was I about to say? By the mass, I was about to say something: where did I leave?
Rey. At 'closes in the consequence,' at 'friend or so,' and 'gentleman.'
Pol. At 'closes in the consequence,' ay, marry;
He closes thus: 'I know the gentleman;
I saw him yesterday, or t' other day,
Or then, or then; with such, or such; and, as you say,
There was a' gaming; there o'ertook in 's rouse;
There falling out at tennis:' see you now;

Your bait of falsehood takes this carp of truth:
And thus do we of wisdom and of reach,
With windlasses and with assays of bias,
By indirections find directions out:
So by my former lecture and advice,
Shall you my son. You have me, have you not?
Rey. My lord, I have.
Pol. God be wi' you; fare you well.
Rey. Good my lord!
Pol. Observe his inclination in yourself.
Rey. I shall, my lord.
Pol. And let him ply his music.
Rey. Well, my lord.
Pol. Farewell! [*Exit Reynaldo.*

Enter OPHELIA.

How now, Ophelia! what's the matter?
Oph. O, my lord, my lord, I have been so affrighted!
Pol. With what, i' the name of God?
Oph. My lord, as I was sewing in my closet,
Lord Hamlet, with his doublet all unbraced;
No hat upon his head; his stockings fouled,
Ungartered and down-gyved to his ancle;
Pale as his shirt; his knees knocking each other;
And with a look so piteous in purport
As if he had been loosed out of hell
To speak of horrors, — he comes before me.
Pol. Mad for thy love?
Oph. My lord, I do not know;
But truly, I do fear it.
Pol. What said he?

Oph. He took me by the wrist and held me hard;
Then goes he to the length of all his arm;
And, with his other hand thus o'er his brow,
He falls to such perusal of my face
As he would draw it. Long stayed he so;
At last, a little shaking of mine arm
And thrice his head thus waving up and down,
He raised a sigh so piteous and profound
That it did seem to shatter all his bulk
And end his being: that done, he lets me go:
And, with his head over his shoulder turned,
He seemed to find his way without his eyes;
For out o' doors he went without their help,
And, to the last, bended their light on me.

Pol. Come, go with me: I will go seek the king.
This is the very ecstasy of love,
Whose violent property fordoes itself
And leads the will to desperate undertakings
As oft as any passion under heaven
That does afflict our natures. I am sorry.
What, have you given him any hard words of late?

Oph. No, my good lord, but, as you did command,
I did repel his letters and denied
His access to me.

Pol. That hath made him mad.
I am sorry that with better heed and judgment
I had not quoted him: I feared he did but trifle,
And meant to wreck thee; but, beshrew my jealousy!
By heaven, it is as proper to our age
To cast beyond ourselves in our opinions
As it is common for the younger sort

To lack discretion. Come, go we to the king:
This must be known; which, being kept close, might move
More grief to hide than hate to utter love. [*Exeunt.*

SCENE II. *A room in the castle.*

Enter KING, QUEEN, ROSENCRANTZ, GUILDENSTERN, *and* Attendants.

King. Welcome, dear Rosencrantz and Guildenstern!
Moreover that we much did long to see you,
The need we have to use you did provoke
Our hasty sending. Something have you heard
Of Hamlet's transformation; so call it,
Sith nor the exterior nor the inward man
Resembles that it was. What it should be,
More than his father's death, that thus hath put him
So much from the understanding of himself,
I cannot dream of: I entreat you both,
That being of so young days brought up with him,
And sith so neighbored to his youth and humor
That you vouchsafe your rest here in our court
Some little time: so by your companies
To draw him on to pleasures, and to gather,
So much as from occasion you may glean,
Whether aught, to us unknown, afflicts him thus,
That, opened, lies within our remedy.

Queen. Good gentlemen, he hath much talked of you;
And sure I am two men there are not living
To whom he more adheres. If it will please you
To show us so much gentry and good will
As to expend your time with us awhile,
For the supply and profit of our hope,

Your visitation shall receive such thanks
As fits a king's remembrance.
Ros. Both your majesties
Might, by the sovereign power you have of us,
Put your dread pleasures more into command
Than to entreaty.
Guil. But we both obey,
And here give up ourselves, in the full bent
To lay our service freely at your feet,
To be commanded.
King. Thanks, Rosencrantz and gentle Guildenstern.
Queen. Thanks, Guildenstern and gentle Rosencrantz.
And I beseech you instantly to visit
My too much changed son. Go, some of you,
And bring these gentlemen where Hamlet is.
Guil. Heavens make our presence and our practices
Pleasant and helpful to him!
Queen. Ay, amen!
[*Exeunt Rosencrantz, Guildenstern, and some Attendants.*

Enter POLONIUS.

Pol. The ambassadors from Norway, my good lord,
Are joyfully returned.
King. Thou still hast been the father of good news.
Pol. Have I, my lord? I assure you, my good liege,
I hold my duty, as I hold my soul,
Both to my God, and to my gracious king:
And I do think, or else this brain of mine
Hunts not the trail of policy so sure
As it hath used to do, that I have found

The very cause of Hamlet's lunacy.

King. O, speak of that; that do I long to hear.

Pol. Give first admittance to the ambassadors;
My news shall be the fruit to that great feast.

King. Thyself do grace to them, and bring them in.
[*Exit Polonius.*

He tells me, my dear Gertrude, he hath found
The head and source of all your son's distemper.

Queen. I doubt it is no other but the main;
His father's death, and our o'erhasty marriage.

King. Well, we shall sift him.

Re-enter POLONIUS, *with* VOLTIMAND *and* CORNELIUS.

Welcome, my good friends!
Say, Voltimand, what from our brother Norway?

Volt. Most fair return of greetings and desires.
Upon our first, he sent out to suppress
His nephew's levies; which to him appeared
To be a preparation 'gainst the Polack;
But, better looked into, he truly found
It was against your highness: whereat grieved,
That so his sickness, age and impotence
Was falsely borne in hand, sends out arrests
On Fortinbras; which he, in brief, obeys;
Receives rebuke from Norway, and in fine
Makes vow before his uncle never more
To give the assay of arms against your majesty.
Whereon old Norway, overcome with joy,
Gives him three thousand crowns in annual fee,
And his commission to employ those soldiers,
So levied as before, against the Polack:

With an entreaty, herein further shown, [*Giving a paper.*
That it might please you to give quiet pass
Through your dominions for his enterprise,
On such regards of safety and allowance
As therein are set down.

King. It likes us well;
And at our more considered time we 'll read,
Answer, and think upon this business.
Meantime we thank you for your well-took labor:
Go to your rest; at night we 'll feast together;
Most welcome home!

[*Exeunt Voltimand and Cornelius.*

Pol. This business is well ended.
My liege, and madam, to expostulate
What majesty should be, what duty is,
Why day is day, night night, and time is time,
Were nothing but to waste night, day and time.
Therefore, since brevity is the soul of wit,
And tediousness the limbs and outward flourishes,
I will be brief: your noble son is mad:
Mad call I it; for, to define true madness,
What is 't but to be nothing else but mad?
But let that go.

Queen. More matter, with less art.

Pol. Madam, I swear I use no art at all.
That he is mad, 't is true: 't is true 't is pity;
And pity 't is 't is true: a foolish figure;
But farewell it, for I will use no art.
Mad let us grant him, then: and now remains
That we find out the cause of this effect,
Or rather say, the cause of this defect,

For this effect defective comes by cause:
Thus it remains, and the remainder thus.
Perpend.
I have a daughter — have while she is mine —
Who, in her duty and obedience, mark,
Hath given me this: now gather, and surmise. [*Reads.*
'To the celestial and my soul's idol, the most beautified Ophelia,' —
That 's an ill phrase, a vile phrase; 'beautified' is a vile phrase: but you shall hear. Thus: [*Reads.*
'In her excellent white bosom, these, &c.'
Queen. Came this from Hamlet to her?
Pol. Good madam, stay awhile; I will be faithful. [*Reads.*

'Doubt thou the stars are fire;
Doubt that the sun doth move;
Doubt truth to be a liar;
But never doubt I love.

'O dear Ophelia, I am ill at these numbers; I have not art to reckon my groans: but that I love thee best, O most best, believe it. Adieu.
'Thine evermore, most dear lady, whilst this machine is to him, HAMLET.'
This, in obedience, hath my daughter shown me,
And more above, hath his solicitings,
As they fell out by time, by means and place,
All given to mine ear.
King. But how hath she
Received his love?
Pol. What do you think of me?
King. As of a man faithful and honorable.

Pol. I would fain prove so. But what might you think
When I had seen this hot love on the wing —
As I perceived it, I must tell you that,
Before my daughter told me — what might you,
Or my dear majesty your queen here, think,
If I had played the desk or table-book,
Or given my heart a winking, mute and dumb,
Or looked upon this love with idle sight;
What might you think? No, I went round to work,
And my young mistress thus I did bespeak:
'Lord Hamlet is a prince, out of thy star;
This must not be:' and then I precepts gave her,
That she should lock herself from his resort,
Admit no messengers, receive no tokens.
Which done, she took the fruits of my advice;
And he, repulsed — a short tale to make —
Fell into a sadness, then into a fast,
Thence to a watch, thence into a weakness,
Thence to a lightness, and, by this declension,
Into the madness wherein now he raves,
And all we mourn for.

King. Do you think 't is this?

Queen. It may be, very likely.

Pol. Hath there been such a time — I 'd fain know that —
That I have positively said ' 'T is so,'
When it proved otherwise?

King. Not that I know.

Pol. [*Pointing to his head and shoulder*] Take this from this, if this be otherwise:
If circumstances lead me, I will find

Where truth is hid, though it were hid indeed
Within the centre.

King. How may we try it further?

Pol. You know, sometimes he walks four hours together
Here in the lobby.

Queen. So he does indeed.

Pol. At such a time I 'll loose my daughter to him:
Be you and I behind an arras then;
Mark the encounter: if he love her not
And be not from his reason fallen thereon,
Let me be no assistant for a state,
But keep a farm and carters.

King. We will try it.

Queen. But, look, where sadly the poor wretch comes reading.

Pol. Away, I do beseech you, both away:
I 'll board him presently.

[*Exeunt King, Queen, and Attendants.*

Enter HAMLET *reading.*

O, give me leave:
How does my good lord Hamlet?

Ham. Well, God-a-mercy.

Pol. Do you know me, my lord?

Ham. Excellent well; you are a fishmonger.

Pol. Not I, my lord.

Ham. Then I would you were so honest a man.

Pol. Honest, my lord!

Ham. Ay, sir; to be honest, as this world goes, is to be one man picked out of ten thousand.

Pol. That 's very true, my lord.

Ham. For if the sun breed maggots in a dead dog, being a god kissing carrion, — Have you a daughter?

Pol. I have, my lord.

Ham. Let her not walk i' the sun: friend, look to 't.

Pol. [*Aside*] How say you by that? Still harping on my daughter: yet he knew me not at first; he said I was a fishmonger: he is far gone, far gone: and truly in my youth I suffered much extremity for love; very near this. I 'll speak to him again. What do you read, my lord?

Ham. Words, words, words.

Pol. What is the matter, my lord?

Ham. Between who?

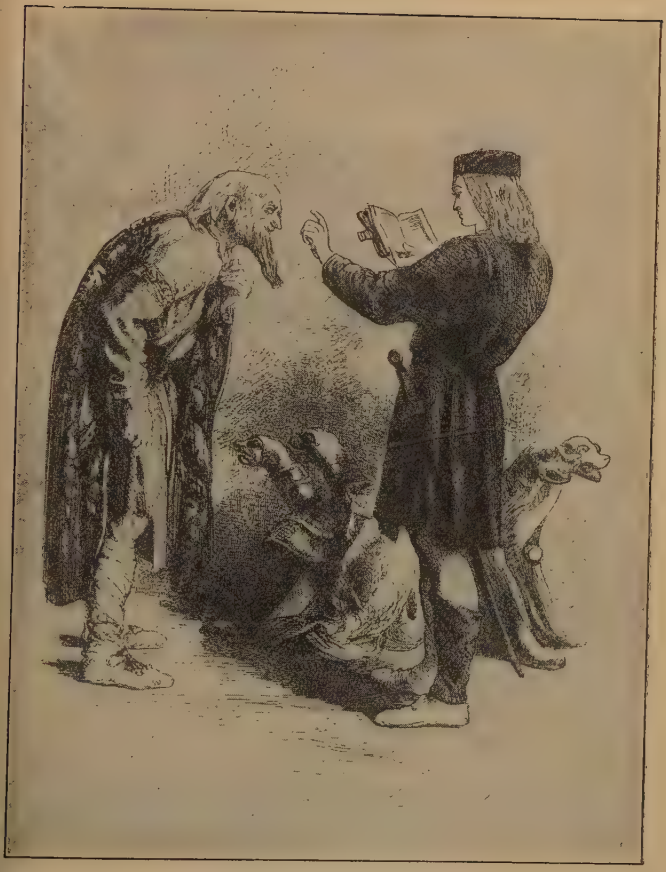
Pol. I mean, the matter that you read, my lord.

Ham. Slanders, sir: for the satirical rogue says here that old men have grey beards, that their faces are wrinkled, their eyes purging thick amber and plum-tree gum and that they have a plentiful lack of wit, together with most weak hams: all which, sir, though I most powerfully and potently believe, yet I hold it not honesty to have it thus set down, for yourself, sir, should be old as I am, if like a crab you could go backward.

Pol. [*Aside*] Though this be madness, yet there is method in 't. Will you walk out of the air, my lord?

Ham. Into my grave.

Pol. Indeed, that is out o' the air. [*Aside*] How pregnant sometimes his replies are! a happiness that often madness hits on, which reason and sanity could not so prosperously be delivered of. I will leave him, and suddenly contrive the means of meeting between him and



Slanders, sir.

— Act II. Scene 2.

my daughter. — My honorable lord, I will most humbly take my leave of you.

Ham. You cannot, sir, take from me any thing that I will more willingly part withal: except my life, except my life, except my life.

Pol. Fare you well, my lord.

Ham. These tedious old fools!

Enter ROSENCRANTZ *and* GUILDENSTERN.

Pol. You go to seek the Lord Hamlet; there he is.

Ros. [*To Polonius*] God save you, sir!

[*Exit Polonius.*

Guil. My honored lord!

Ros. My most dear lord!

Ham. My excellent good friends! How dost thou, Guildenstern? Ah, Rosencrantz! Good lads, how do ye both?

Ros. As the indifferent children of the earth.

Guil. Happy, in that we are not over-happy;
On fortune's cap we are not the very button.

Ham. Nor the soles of her shoe?

Ros. Neither, my lord.

Ham. What's the news?

Ros. None, my lord, but that the world's grown honest.

Ham. Then is doomsday near: but your news is not true. Let me question more in particular: what have you, my good friends, deserved at the hands of fortune, that she sends you to prison hither?

Guil. Prison, my lord!

Ham. Denmark's a prison.

Ros. Then is the world one.

Ham. A goodly one; in which there are many confines, wards and dungeons, Denmark being one o' the worst.

Ros. We think not so, my lord.

Ham. Why, then, 't is none to you; for there is nothing either good or bad, but thinking makes it so: to me it is a prison.

Ros. Why then, your ambition makes it one; 't is too narrow for your mind.

Ham. O God, I could be bounded in a nutshell and count myself a king of infinite space, were it not that I have bad dreams.

Guil. Which dreams indeed are ambition, for the very substance of the ambitious is merely the shadow of a dream.

Ham. A dream itself is but a shadow.

Ros. Truly, and I hold ambition of so airy and light a quality that it is but a shadow's shadow.

Ham. Then are our beggars bodies, and our monarchs and outstretched heroes the beggars' shadows. Shall we to the court? for, by my fay, I cannot reason.

Ros. } We 'll wait upon you.
Guil. }

Ham. No such matter: I will not sort you with the rest of my servants, for, to speak to you like an honest man, I am most dreadfully attended. But, in the beaten way of friendship, what make you at Elsinore?

Ros. To visit you, my lord; no other occasion.

Ham. Beggar that I am, I am even poor in thanks; but I thank you: and sure, dear friends, my thanks are

There is a kind of confession in your looks which your modesties have not craft enough to color.

— Act II. Scene 2.

too dear a halfpenny. Were you not sent for? Is it your own inclining? Is it a free visitation? Come, deal justly with me: come, come; nay, speak.

Guil. What should we say, my lord?

Ham. Why, anything, but to the purpose. You were sent for; and there is a kind of confession in your looks which your modesties have not craft enough to color: I know the good king and queen have sent for you.

Ros. To what end, my lord?

Ham. That you must teach me. But let me conjure you, by the rights of our fellowship, by the consonancy of our youth, by the obligation of our ever-preserved love, and by what more dear a better proposer could charge you withal, be even and direct with me, whether you were sent for, or no.

Ros. [*Aside to Guil.*] What say you?

Ham. [*Aside*] Nay, then, I have an eye of you. — If you love me, hold not off.

Guil. My lord, we were sent for.

Ham. I will tell you why; so shall my anticipation prevent your discovery, and your secrecy to the king and queen moult no feather. I have of late — but wherefore I know not — lost all my mirth, forgone all custom of exercises; and indeed it goes so heavily with my disposition that this goodly frame, the earth, seems to me a sterile promontory, this most excellent canopy, the air, look you, this brave o'erhanging firmament, this majestical roof fretted with golden fire, why, it appears no other thing to me than a foul and pestilent congregation of vapors. What a piece of work is a man! how noble in reason! how infinite in faculty! in form and moving how

express and admirable! in action how like an angel! in apprehension how like a god! the beauty of the world! the paragon of animals! And yet, to me, what is this quintessence of dust? man delights not me: no, nor woman neither, though by your smiling you seem to say so.

Ros. My lord, there was no such stuff in my thoughts.

Ham. Why did you laugh then, when I said 'man delights not me'?

Ros. To think, my lord, if you delight not in man, what lenten entertainment the players shall receive from you: we coted them on the way; and hither are they coming, to offer you service.

Ham. He that plays the king shall be welcome; his majesty shall have tribute of me; the adventurous knight shall use his foil and target; the lover shall not sigh gratis; the humorous man shall end his part in peace; the clown shall make those laugh whose lungs are tickle o' the sere; and the lady shall say her mind freely, or the blank verse shall halt for 't. What players are they?

Ros. Even those you were wont to take delight in, the tragedians of the city.

Ham. How chances it they travel? their residence, both in reputation and profit, was better both ways.

Ros. I think their inhibition comes by the means of the late innovation.

Ham. Do they hold the same estimation they did when I was in the city? are they so followed?

Ros. No, indeed, are they not.

Ham. How comes it? do they grow rusty?

Ros. Nay, their endeavor keeps in the wonted pace:

but there is, sir, an aery of children, little eyases, that cry out on the top of question, and are most tyrannically clapped for 't: these are now the fashion, and so berattle the common stages — so they call them — that many wearing rapiers are afraid of goose-quills and dare scarce come hither.

Ham. What, are they children? who maintains 'em? how are they escoted? Will they pursue the quality no longer than they can sing? will they not say afterwards, if they should grow themselves to common players — as it is most like, if their means are no better — their writers do them wrong, to make them exclaim against their own succession?

Ros. 'Faith, there has been much to do on both sides; and the nation holds it no sin to tarre them to controversy: there was, for a while, no money bid for argument, unless the poet and the player went to cuffs in the question.

Ham. Is 't possible?

Guil. O, there has been much throwing about of brains.

Ham. Do the boys carry it away?

Ros. Ay, that they do, my lord; Hercules and his load too.

Ham. It is not very strange; for mine uncle is king of Denmark, and those that would make mows at him while my father lived, give twenty, forty, fifty, an hundred ducats a-piece for his picture in little. 'Sblood, there is something in this more than natural, if philosophy could find it out.

[*Flourish of trumpets within.*

Guil. There are the players.

Ham. Gentlemen, you are welcome to Elsinore. Your hands, come then: the appurtenance of welcome is fashion and ceremony: let me comply with you in this garb, lest my extent to the players, which, I tell you, must show fairly outward, should more appear like entertainment than yours. You are welcome: but my uncle-father and aunt-mother are deceived.

Guil. In what, my dear lord?

Ham. I am but mad north-north-west: when the wind is southerly I know a hawk from a handsaw.

Enter POLONIUS.

Pol. Well be with you, gentlemen! 371

Ham. Hark you, Guildenstern; and you too: at each ear a hearer: that great baby you see there is not yet out of his swaddling-clouts. 375

Ros. Happily he 's the second time come to them; for they say an old man is twice a child.

Ham. I will prophesy he comes to tell me of the players; mark it. — You say right, sir: o' Monday morning; 't was so indeed. 380

Pol. My lord, I have news to tell you.

Ham. My lord, I have news to tell you. When Roscius was an actor in Rome,—

Pol. The actors are come hither, my lord.

Ham. Buz, buz! 385

Pol. Upon mine honor,—

Ham. Then came each actor on his ass,—

Pol. The best actors in the world, either for tragedy, comedy, history, pastoral, pastoral-comical, historical-

pastoral, tragical-historical, tragical-comical-historical-pastoral, scene individable, or poem unlimited: Seneca cannot be too heavy, nor Plautus too light. For the law of writ and the liberty, these are the only men.

Ham. O Jephthah, judge of Israel, what a treasure hadst thou!

Pol. What a treasure had he, my lord?

Ham. Why,

'One fair daughter, and no more,
The which he loved passing well.'

Pol. [*Aside*] Still on my daughter.

Ham. Am I not i' the right, old Jephthah?

Pol. If you call me Jephthah, my lord, I have a daughter that I love passing well.

Ham. Nay, that follows not.

Pol. What follows, then, my lord?

Ham. Why,

'As by lot, God wot,'

and then, you know,

'It came to pass, as most like it was,'—

the first row of the pious chanson will show you more; for look, where my abridgements come.

Enter four or five Players.

You are welcome, masters; welcome, all. I am glad to see thee well. Welcome, good friends. O, my old friend! thy face is valanced since I saw thee last: comest thou to beard me in Denmark? What, my young lady and mistress! By 'r lady, your ladyship is nearer to heaven than when I saw you last, by the altitude of a chopine. Pray God, your voice, like a piece of uncurrent gold, be

not cracked within the ring. Masters, you are all welcome. We 'll e'en to't like French falconers, fly at any thing we see: we 'll have a speech straight: come, give us a taste of your quality; come, a passionate speech.

First Play. What speech, my lord?

Ham. I heard thee speak me a speech once, but it was never acted; or, if it was, not above once; for the play, I remember, pleased not the million; 't was caviare to the general: but it was — as I received it, and others, whose judgments in such matters cried in the top of mine — an excellent play, well digested in the scenes, set down with as much modesty as cunning. I remember, one said there were no sallets in the lines to make the matter savory, nor no matter in the phrase that might indict the author of affection; but called it an honest method, as wholesome as sweet, and by very much more handsome than fine. One speech in it I chiefly loved: 't was Æneas' tale to Dido; and thereabout of it especially, where he speaks of Priam's slaughter: if it live in your memory, begin at this line: let me see, let me see —

'The rugged Pyrrhus, like the Hyrcanian beast,'—

it is not so: — it begins with Pyrrhus: —

'The rugged Pyrrhus, he whose sable arms,
Black as his purpose, did the night resemble
When he lay couched in the ominous horse,
Hath now this dread and black complexion smeared
With heraldry more dismal; head to foot
Now is he total gules; horridly tricked
With blood of fathers, mothers, daughters, sons,
Baked and impasted with the parching streets,

That lend a tyrannous and damned light
To their lord's murder: roasted in wrath and fire,
And thus o'er-sized with coagulate gore,
With eyes like carbuncles, the hellish Pyrrhus
Old grandsire Priam seeks.'

So, proceed you.

Pol. 'Fore God, my lord, well spoken, with good accent and good discretion.

First Play. 'Anon he finds him
Striking too short at Greeks; his antique sword,
Rebellious to his arm, lies where it falls,
Repugnant to command: unequal matched,
Pyrrhus at Priam drives; in rage strikes wide;
But with the whiff and wind of his fell sword
The unnerved father falls. Then senseless Ilium,
Seeming to feel this blow, with flaming top
Stoops to his base, and with a hideous crash
Takes prisoner Pyrrhus' ear: for, lo! his sword,
Which was declining on the milky head
Of reverend Priam, seemed i' the air to stick:
So, as a painted tyrant, Pyrrhus stood,
And like a neutral to his will and matter,
Did nothing.
But, as we often see, against some storm,
A silence in the heavens, the rack stand still,
The bold wind speechless and the orb below
As hush as death, anon the dreadful thunder
Doth rend the region, so, after Pyrrhus' pause,
Aroused vengeance sets him new a-work;
And never did the Cyclops' hammers fall
On Mars's armor forged for proof eterne

With less remorse than Pyrrhus' bleeding sword
Now falls on Priam.
Out, out, thou strumpet, Fortune! All you gods,
In general synod, take away her power;
Break all the spokes and fellies from her wheel,
And bowl the round nave down the hill of heaven,
As low as to the fiends!'

Pol. This is too long.

Ham. It shall to the barber's, with your beard. Prithee say on: he 's for a jig or a tale, or he sleeps: say on: come to Hecuba.

First Play. 'But who, O, who had seen the mobled queen —'

Ham. 'The mobled queen?'

Pol. That 's good; 'mobled queen' is good.

First Play. 'Run barefoot up and down, threatening the flames
With bisson rheum; a clout upon that head
Where late the diadem stood, and for a robe,
About her lank and all o'er-teemed loins,
A blanket, in the alarm of fear caught up;
Who this had seen, with tongue in venom steeped,
'Gainst Fortune's state would treason have pronounced:
But if the gods themselves did see her then
When she saw Pyrrhus make malicious sport
In mincing with his sword her husband's limbs,
The instant burst of clamor that she made,
Unless things mortal move them not at all,
Would have made milch the burning eyes of heaven,

And passion in the gods.'

Pol. Look, whether he has not turned his color and has tears in 's eyes. Pray you, no more.

Ham. 'T is well; I 'll have thee speak out the rest soon. Good my lord, will you see the players well bestowed? Do you hear, let them be well used; for they are the abstract and brief chronicles of the time: after your death you were better have a bad epitaph than their ill report while you live.

Pol. My lord, I will use them according to their desert.

Ham. God's bodykins, man, much better: use every man after his desert, and who should 'scape whipping? Use them after your own honor and dignity: the less they deserve, the more merit is in your bounty. Take them in.

Pol. Come, sirs.

Ham. Follow him, friends: we 'll hear a play to-morrow. [*Exit Polonius with all the Players but the First.*] Dost thou hear me, old friend; can you play the Murder of Gonzago?

First Play. Ay, my lord.

Ham. We 'll ha 't to-morrow night. You could, for a need, study a speech of some dozen or sixteen lines, which I would set down and insert in 't, could you not?

First Play. Ay, my lord.

Ham. Very well. Follow that lord; and look you mock him not. [*Exit First Player.*] My good friends, I 'll leave you till night: you are welcome to Elsinore.

Ros. Good my lord!

Ham. Ay, so, God be wi' ye; [*Exeunt Rosencrantz and*

Guildenstern.] Now I am alone.
O, what a rogue and peasant slave am I!
Is it not monstrous that this player here,
But in a fiction, in a dream of passion,
Could force his soul so to his own conceit
That from her working all his visage wanned,
Tears in his eyes, distraction in 's aspect,
A broken voice, and his whole function suiting
With forms to his conceit? and all for nothing!
For Hecuba!
What 's Hecuba to him, or he to Hecuba,
That he should weep for her? What would he do,
Had he the motive and the cue for passion
That I have? He would drown the stage with tears
And cleave the general ear with horrid speech,
Make mad the guilty and appal the free,
Confound the ignorant, and amaze indeed
The very faculties of eyes and ears.
Yet I,
A dull and muddy-mettled rascal, peak,
Like John-a-dreams, unpregnant of my cause,
And can say nothing; no, not for a king,
Upon whose property and most dear life
A damned defeat was made. Am I a coward?
Who calls me villain? breaks my pate across?
Plucks off my beard, and blows it in my face?
Tweaks me by the nose? gives me the lie i' the throat,
As deep as to the lungs? who does me this?
Ha!
'Swounds, I should take it: for it cannot be

HAMLET
SIR JOHNSTON FORBES-ROBERTSON

The play 's the thing
Wherein I 'll catch the conscience of the king.
— Act II. Scene 2.

But I am pigeon-livered and lack gall
To make oppression bitter, or ere this
I should have fatted all the region kites
With this slave's offal: bloody, beastly villain!
Remorseless, treacherous, lecherous, kindless villain!
O, vengeance!
Why, what an ass am I! This is most brave,
That I, the son of a dear father murdered,
Prompted to my revenge by heaven and hell,
Must, vixen-like, unpack my heart with words,
And fall a-cursing, like a very drab,
A scullion!
Fie upon 't! foh! About, my brain! I have heard
That guilty creatures sitting at a play
Have by the very cunning of the scene
Been struck so to the soul that presently
They have proclaimed their malefactions;
For murder, though it have no tongue, will speak
With most miraculous organ. I 'll have these players
Play something like the murder of my father
Before mine uncle: I 'll observe his looks;
I 'll tent him to the quick: if he but blench,
I know my course. The spirit that I have seen
May be the devil: and the devil hath power
To assume a pleasing shape; yea, and perhaps
Out of my weakness and my melancholy,
As he is very potent with such spirits,
Abuses me to damn me: I 'll have grounds
More relative than this: the play 's the thing
Wherein I 'll catch the conscience of the king.

[*Exit.*

ACT III.

Scene I. *A room in the castle.*

Enter King, Queen, Polonius, Ophelia, Rosencrantz, *and* Guildenstern.

King. And can you, by no drift of circumstance
Get from him why he puts on this confusion,
Grating so harshly all his days of quiet
With turbulent and dangerous lunacy?

Ros. He does confess he feels himself distracted;
But from what cause he will by no means speak.

Guil. Nor do we find him forward to be sounded,
But, with a crafty madness, keeps aloof,
When we would bring him on to some confession
Of his true state.

Queen. Did he receive you well?

Ros. Most like a gentleman.

Guil. But with much forcing of his disposition.

Ros. Niggard of question; but, of our demands,
Most free in his reply.

Queen. Did you assay him
To any pastime?

Ros. Madam, it so fell out, that certain players
We o'er-raught on the way: of these we told him;
And there did seem in him a kind of joy
To hear of it: they are about the court,
And, as I think, they have already order
This night to play before him.

Pol. 'T is most true:
And he beseeched me to entreat your majesties

To hear and see the matter.

King. With all my heart; and it doth much content me
To hear him so inclined.
Good gentlemen, give him a further edge,
And drive his purpose on to these delights.

Ros. We shall, my lord.

[*Exeunt Rosencrantz and Guildenstern.*

King. Sweet Gertrude, leave us too;
For we have closely sent for Hamlet hither,
That he, as 't were by accident, may here
Affront Ophelia.
Her father and myself, lawful espials,
Will so bestow ourselves that, seeing, unseen,
We may of their encounter frankly judge,
And gather by him, as he is behaved,
If 't be the affliction of his love or no
That thus he suffers for.

Queen. I shall obey you.
And for your part, Ophelia, I do wish
That your good beauties be the happy cause
Of Hamlet's wildness: so shall I hope your virtues
Will bring him to his wonted way again,
To both your honors.

Oph. Madam, I wish it may. [*Exit Queen.*

Pol. Ophelia, walk you here. Gracious, so please you,
We will bestow ourselves. [*To Ophelia*] Read on this book;
That show of such an exercise may color
Your loneliness. We are oft to blame in this, —
'T is too much proved — that with devotion's visage

And pious action we do sugar o'er
The devil himself.

King. [*Aside*] O, 't is too true!
How smart a lash that speech doth give my conscience!
The harlot's cheek, beautied with plastering art,
Is not more ugly to the thing that helps it
Than is my deed to my most painted word:
O heavy burthen!

Pol. I hear him coming: let 's withdraw, my lord.
[*Exeunt King and Polonius.*

Enter HAMLET.

Ham. To be, or not to be: that is the question:
Whether 't is nobler in the mind to suffer
The slings and arrows of outrageous fortune,
Or to take arms against a sea of troubles,
And by opposing end them. To die: to sleep;
No more; and by a sleep to say we end
The heart-ache and the thousand natural shocks
That flesh is heir to, 't is a consummation
Devoutly to be wished. To die, to sleep;
To sleep: perchance to dream: ay, there 's the rub;
For in that sleep of death what dreams may come
When we have shuffled off this mortal coil,
Must give us pause: there 's the respect
That makes calamity of so long life;
For who would bear the whips and scorns of time,
The oppressor's wrong, the proud man's contumely,
The pangs of despised love, the law's delay,
The insolence of office and the spurns
That patient merit of the unworthy takes,

When he himself might his quietus make
With a bare bodkin? Who would fardels bear,
To grunt and sweat under a weary life,
But that the dread of something after death,
The undiscovered country from whose bourn
No traveller returns, puzzles the will
And makes us rather bear those ills we have
Than fly to others that we know not of?
Thus conscience does make cowards of us all;
And thus the native hue of resolution
Is sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought,
And enterprises of great pith and moment
With this regard their currents turn awry,
And lose the name of action.— Soft you now!
The fair Ophelia! Nymph, in thy orisons
Be all my sins remembered.
Oph. Good my lord,
How does your honor for this many a day?
Ham. I humbly thank you; well, well, well.
Oph. My lord, I have remembrances of yours,
That I have longed long to re-deliver;
I pray you, now receive them.
Ham. No, not I;
I never gave you aught.
Oph. My honored lord, you know right well you did;
And, with them, words of so sweet breath composed
As made the things more rich: their perfume lost,
Take these again; for to the noble mind
Rich gifts wax poor when givers prove unkind
There, my lord.
Ham. Ha, ha! are you honest?

Oph. My lord?

Ham. Are you fair?

Oph. What means your lordship?

Ham. That if you be honest and fair, your honesty should admit no discourse to your beauty.

Oph. Could beauty, my lord, have better commerce than with honesty?

Ham. Ay, truly; for the power of beauty will sooner transform honesty from what it is than the force of honesty can translate beauty into his likeness: this was sometime a paradox, but now the time gives it proof. I did love you once.

Oph. Indeed, my lord, you made me believe so.

Ham. You should not have believed me; for virtue cannot so inoculate our old stock but we shall relish of it: I loved you not.

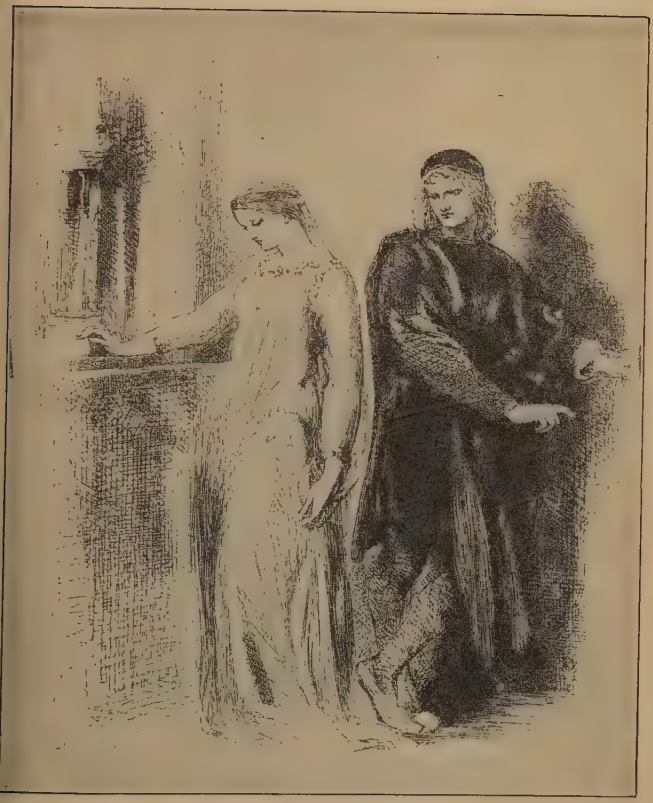
Oph. I was the more deceived.

Ham. Get thee to a nunnery: why wouldst thou be a breeder of sinners? I am myself indifferent honest; but yet I could accuse me of such things that it were better my mother had not borne me: I am very proud, revengeful, ambitious, with more offences at my beck than I have thoughts to put them in, imagination to give them shape, or time to act them in. What should such fellows as I do crawling between earth and heaven? We are arrant knaves, all; believe none of us. Go thy ways to a nunnery. Where 's your father?

Oph. At home, my lord.

Ham. Let the doors be shut upon him, that he may play the fool no where but in 's own house. Farewell.

Oph. O, help him, you sweet heavens!



I was the more deceived.

— Act III. Scene 1.

Ham. If thou dost marry, I 'll give thee this plague for thy dowry: be thou as chaste as ice, as pure as snow, thou shalt not escape calumny. Get thee to a nunnery, go: farewell. Or, if thou wilt needs marry, marry a fool; for wise men know well enough what monsters you make of them. To a nunnery, go, and quickly too. Farewell.

Oph. O heavenly powers, restore him!

Ham. I have heard of your paintings too, well enough; God has given you one face, and you make yourselves another: you jig, you amble, and you lisp, and nick-name God's creatures, and make your wantonness your ignorance. Go to, I 'll no more on 't; it hath made me mad. I say, we will have no more marriages: those that are married already, all but one, shall live; the rest shall keep as they are. To a nunnery, go. [*Exit.*

Oph. O, what a noble mind is here o'erthrown!
The courtier's, soldier's, scholar's, eye, tongue, sword;
The expectancy and rose of the fair state,
The glass of fashion and the mould of form,
The observed of all observers, quite, quite down!
And I, of ladies most deject and wretched,
That sucked the honey of his music vows,
Now see that noble and most sovereign reason,
Like sweet bells jangled, out of tune and harsh;
That unmatched form and feature of blown youth
Blasted with ecstasy: O, woe is me,
To have seen what I have seen, see what I see!

Re-enter KING *and* POLONIUS.

King. Love! his affections do not that way tend;
Nor what he spake, though it lacked form a little,

Was not like madness. There's something in his soul,
O'er which his melancholy sits on brood;
And I do doubt the hatch and the disclose
Will be some danger: which for to prevent,
I have in quick determination
Thus set it down: he shall with speed to England,
For the demand of our neglected tribute:
Haply the seas and countries different
With variable objects shall expel
This something-settled matter in his heart,
Whereon his brains still beating puts him thus
From fashion of himself. What think you on't?

Pol. It shall do well: but yet do I believe
The origin and commencement of his grief
Sprung from neglected love. How now, Ophelia!
You need not tell us what Lord Hamlet said;
We heard it all. My lord, do as you please;
But, if you hold it fit, after the play
Let his queen mother all alone entreat him
To show his grief: let her be round with him;
And I'll be placed, so please you, in the ear
Of all their conference. If she find him not,
To England send him, or confine him where
Your wisdom best shall think.

King. It shall be so:
Madness in great ones must not unwatched go. [*Exeunt.*

SCENE II. *A hall in the castle.*

Enter HAMLET *and* Players.

Ham. Speak the speech, I pray you, as I pronounced it to you, trippingly on the tongue: but if you mouth it

as many of your players do, I had as lief the town-crier spoke my lines. Nor do not saw the air too much with your hand, thus, but use all gently; for in the very torrent, tempest, and, as I may say, the whirlwind of passion, you must acquire and beget a temperance that may give it smoothness. O, it offends me to the soul to hear a robustious periwig-pated fellow tear a passion to tatters, to very rags, to split the ears of the groundlings, who for the most part are capable of nothing but inexplicable dumb-shows and noise: I would have such a fellow whipped for o'erdoing Termagant; it out-herods Herod: pray you, avoid it.

First Play. I warrant your honor.

Ham. Be not too tame neither, but let your own discretion be your tutor: suit the action to the word, the word to the action; with this special observance, that you o'erstep not the modesty of nature: for any thing so overdone is from the purpose of playing, whose end, both at the first and now, was and is, to hold, as 't were, the mirror up to nature; to show virtue her own feature, scorn her own image, and the very age and body of the time his form and pressure. Now this overdone, or come tardy off, though it make the unskilful laugh, cannot but make the judicious grieve; the censure of the which one must in your allowance o'erweigh a whole theatre of others. O, there be players that I have seen play, and heard others praise, and that highly, not to speak it profanely, that, neither having the accent of Christians nor the gait of Christian, pagan, nor man, have so strutted and bellowed that I have thought some of nature's journeymen had made men and not made them well, they imitated humanity so abominably.

First Play. I hope we have reformed that indifferently with us, sir.

Ham. O, reform it altogether. And let those that play your clowns speak no more than is set down for them; for there be of them that will themselves laugh, to set on some quantity of barren spectators to laugh too; though, in the mean time, some necessary question of the play be then to be considered: that 's villanous, and shows a most pitiful ambition in the fool that uses it. Go, make you ready. [*Exeunt Players.*

Enter POLONIUS, ROSENCRANTZ, *and* GUILDENSTERN.

How now, my lord! will the king hear this piece of work?

Pol. And the queen too, and that presently.

Ham. Bid the players make haste. [*Exit Polonius.*

Will you two help to hasten them?

Guil. } We will, my lord.
Ros. }

[*Exeunt Rosencrantz and Guildenstern.*

Ham. What ho! Horatio!

Enter HORATIO.

Hor. Here, sweet lord, at your service.

Ham. Horatio, thou art e'en as just a man
As e'er my conversation coped withal.

Hor. O, my dear lord, —

Ham. Nay, do not think I flatter;
For what advancement may I hope from thee
That no revenue hast but thy good spirits,
To feed and clothe thee? Why should the poor be flattered?

No, let the candied tongue lick absurd pomp,
And crook the pregnant hinges of the knee
Where thrift may follow fawning. Dost thou hear?
Since my dear soul was mistress of her choice
And could of men distinguish, her election
Hath sealed thee for herself; for thou hast been
As one, in suffering all, that suffers nothing,
A man that fortune's buffets and rewards
Hast ta'en with equal thanks: and blest are those
Whose blood and judgment are so well commingled,
That they are not a pipe for fortune's finger
To sound what stop she please. Give me that man
That is not passion's slave, and I will wear him
In my heart's core, ay, in my heart of heart,
As I do thee. — Something too much of this. —
There is a play to-night before the king;
One scene of it comes near the circumstance
Which I have told thee of my father's death:
I prithee, when thou seest that act afoot,
Even with the very comment of thy soul
Observe mine uncle: if his occulted guilt
Do not itself unkennel in one speech,
It is a damned ghost that we have seen,
And my imaginations are as foul
As Vulcan's stithy. Give him heedful note;
For I mine eyes will rivet to his face,
And after we will both our judgments join
In censure of his seeming.

Hor. Well, my lord:
If he steal aught the whilst this play is playing,
And 'scape detecting, I will pay the theft.

Ham. They are coming to the play; I must be idle: Get you a place.

Danish march. A flourish. Enter KING, QUEEN, POLONIUS, OPHELIA, ROSENCRANTZ, GUILDENSTERN, *and others.*

King. How fares our cousin Hamlet? 89

Ham. Excellent, i' faith; of the chameleon's dish; I eat the air, promise-crammed: you cannot feed capons so.

King. I have nothing with this answer, Hamlet; these words are not mine.

Ham. No, nor mine now. [*To Polonius*] My lord, you played once i' the university, you say? 95

Pol. That did I, my lord; and was accounted a good actor.

Ham. What did you enact?

Pol. I did enact Julius Cæsar: I was killed i' the Capitol; Brutus killed me. 100

Ham. It was a brute part of him to kill so capital a calf there. Be the players ready?

Ros. Ay, my lord; they stay upon your patience.

Queen. Come hither, my dear Hamlet, sit by me. 104

Ham. No, good mother, here 's metal more attractive.

Pol. [*To the King*] O, ho! do you mark that?

Ham. Lady, shall I lie in your lap?

[*Lying down at Ophelia's feet.*

Oph. You are merry, my lord.

Ham. Who, I?

Oph. Ay, my lord. 110

Ham. O God, your only jig-maker. What should a man do but be merry? for, look you, how cheerfully my mother looks, and my father died within these two hours.

Oph. Nay, 't is twice two months, my lord. 114

Ham. So long? Nay then, let the devil wear black, for I 'll have a suit of sables. O heavens! die two months ago, and not forgotten yet? Then there 's hope a great man's memory may outlive his life half a year: but, by 'r lady, he must build churches, then; or else shall he suffer not thinking on, with the hobby-horse, whose epitaph is 'For, O! for, O! the hobby-horse is forgot.' 121

Hautboys play. The dumb-show enters.

Enter a King *and* a Queen *very lovingly; the* Queen *embracing him, and he her. She kneels, and makes show of protestation unto him. He takes her up, and declines his head upon her neck: lays him down upon a bank of flowers: she, seeing him asleep, leaves him. Anon comes in a fellow, takes off his crown, kisses it, and pours poison in the* King's *ears, and exit. The* Queen *returns; finds the* King *dead, and makes passionate action. The* Poisoner, *with some two or three* Mutes, *comes in again, seeming to lament with her. The dead body is carried away. The* Poisoner *wooes the* Queen *with gifts: she seems loath and unwilling awhile, but in the end accepts his love.*

[*Exeunt.*

Oph. What means this, my lord?

Ham. Marry, this is miching mallecho; it means mischief.

Oph. Belike this show imports the argument of the play. 126

Enter Prologue.

Ham. We shall know by this fellow: the players cannot keep counsel; they 'll tell all.

Oph. Will he tell us what this show meant?
Ham. Ay, or any show that you 'll show him.
Oph. I 'll mark the play.
Pro. For us, and for our tragedy,
Here stooping to your clemency,
We beg your hearing patiently. [*Exit.*
Ham. Is this a prologue, or the posy of a ring?
Oph. 'T is brief, my lord.
Ham. As woman's love.

Enter two Players, King *and* Queen.

P. King. Full thirty times hath Phœbus' cart gone round
Neptune's salt wash and Tellus' orbed ground,
And thirty dozen moons with borrowed sheen
About the world have times twelve thirties been
Since love our hearts and Hymen did our hands
Unite commutual in most sacred bands.
P. Queen. So many journeys may the sun and moon
Make us again count o'er ere love be done!
But, woe is me, you are so sick of late,
So far from cheer and from your former state,
That I distrust you. Yet, though I distrust,
Discomfort you, my lord, it nothing must:
For women's fear and love holds quantity;
In neither aught, or in extremity.
Now, what my love is, proof hath made you know;
And as my love is sized, my fear is so:
Where love is great, the littlest doubts are fear;
Where little fears grow great, great love grows there.
P. King. 'Faith, I must leave thee, love, and shortly too:

My operant powers their functions leave to do:
And thou shalt live in this fair world behind,
Honored, beloved; and haply one as kind
For husband shalt thou —
P. Queen O, confound the rest!
Such love must needs be treason in my breast:
In second husband let me be accurst!
None wed the second but who killed the first.
Ham. [*Aside*] Wormwood, wormwood.
P. Queen. The instances that second marriage move
Are base respects of thrift, but none of love:
A second time I kill my husband dead,
When second husband kisses me in bed.
P. King. I do believe you think what now you speak;
But what we do determine oft we break.
Purpose is but the slave to memory,
Of violent birth, but poor validity:
Which now, like fruit unripe, sticks on the tree;
But fall, unshaken, when they mellow be.
Most necessary 't is that we forget
To pay ourselves what to ourselves is debt:
What to ourselves in passion we propose,
The passion ending, doth the purpose lose.
The violence of either grief or joy
Their own enactures with themselves destroy:
Where joy most revels, grief doth most lament;
Grief joys, joy grieves, on slender accident.
This world is not for aye, nor 't is not strange
That even our loves should with our fortunes change;
For 't is a question left us yet to prove,

Whether love lead fortune, or else fortune love.
The great man down, you mark his favorite flies;
The poor advanced makes friends of enemies.
And hitherto doth love on fortune tend;
For who not needs shall never lack a friend,
And who in want a hollow friend doth try,
Directly seasons him his enemy.
But, orderly to end where I begun,
Our wills and fates do so contrary run
That our devices still are overthrown;
Our thoughts are ours, their ends none of our own:
So think thou wilt no second husband wed;
But die thy thoughts when thy first lord is dead.

P. Queen. Nor earth to me give food, nor heaven light!
Sport and repose lock from me day and night!
To desperation turn my trust and hope!
An anchor's cheer in prison be my scope!
Each opposite that blanks the face of joy
Meet what I would have well and it destroy!
Both here and hence pursue me lasting strife,
If, once a widow, ever I be wife!

Ham. If she should break it now!

P. King. 'T is deeply sworn. Sweet, leave me here awhile;
My spirits grow dull, and fain I would beguile
The tedious day with sleep. [*Sleeps.*

P. Queen. Sleep rock thy brain;
And never come mischance between us twain! [*Exit.*

Ham. Madam, how like you this play?

Queen. The lady protests too much, methinks.

Ham. O, but she 'll keep her word.

King. Have you heard the argument? Is there no offence in 't?

Ham. No, no, they do but jest, poison in jest; no offence i' the world.

King. What do you call the play?

Ham. The Mouse-trap. Marry, how? Tropically. This play is the image of a murder done in Vienna: Gonzago is the duke's name; his wife, Baptista: you shall see anon; 't is a knavish piece of work: but what o' that? Your majesty and we that have free souls, it touches us not: let the galled jade wince, our withers are unwrung.

Enter LUCIANUS.

This is one Lucianus, nephew to the king.

Oph. You are as good as a chorus, my lord.

Ham. I could interpret between you and your love, if I could see the puppets dallying. — Begin, murderer; pox, leave thy damnable faces, and begin. Come: 'the croaking raven doth bellow for revenge.'

Luc. Thoughts black, hands apt, drugs fit, and time agreeing;
Confederate season, else no creature seeing;
Thou mixture rank, of midnight weeds collected,
With Hecate's ban thrice blasted, thrice infected,
Thy natural magic and dire property,
On wholesome life usurp immediately.
[*Pours the poison into the sleeper's ears.*

Ham. He poisons him i' the garden for 's estate. His name 's Gonzago: the story is extant, and writ in

choice Italian: you shall see anon how the murderer gets the love of Gonzago's wife.

Oph. The king rises.

Ham. What, frighted with false fire!

Queen. How fares my lord?

Pol. Give o'er the play.

King. Give me some light: away!

All. Lights, lights, lights!

[*Exeunt all but Hamlet and Horatio.*

Ham. Why, let the stricken deer go weep,
The hart ungalled play;
For some must watch, while some must sleep:
So runs the world away.
Would not this, sir, and a forest of feathers — if the rest of my fortunes turn Turk with me — with two Provincial roses on my razed shoes, get me a fellowship in a cry of players, sir?

Hor. Half a share.

Ham. A whole one, I.
For thou dost know, O Damon dear,
This realm dismantled was
Of Jove himself; and now reigns here
A very, very — pajock.

Hor. You might have rhymed.

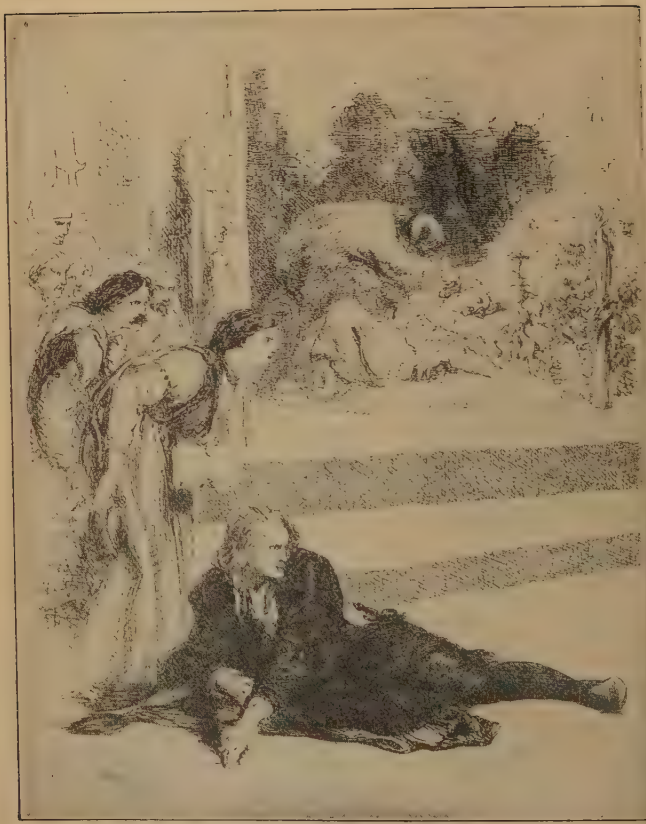
Ham. O good Horatio, I'll take the ghost's word for a thousand pound. Didst perceive?

Hor. Very well, my lord.

Ham. Upon the talk of the poisoning?

Hor. I did very well note him.

Ham. Ah, ha! Come, some music! come, the recorders!



What, frighted with false fire!

— Act III. Scene 2.

Give me some light: away!

— Act III. Scene 2.

For if the king like not the comedy,
Why then, belike, he likes it not, perdy.
Come, some music!

Re-enter ROSENCRANTZ *and* GUILDENSTERN.

Guil. Good my lord, vouchsafe me a word with you.

Ham. Sir, a whole history.

Guil. The king, sir, —

Ham. Ay, sir, what of him?

Guil. Is in his retirement marvellous distempered.

Ham. With drink, sir?

Guil. No, my lord, rather with choler.

Ham. Your wisdom should show itself more richer to signify this to his doctor; for, for me to put him to his purgation would perhaps plunge him into far more choler.

Guil. Good my lord, put your discourse into some frame and start not so wildly from my affair.

Ham. I am tame, sir: pronounce.

Guil. The queen, your mother, in most great affliction of spirit, hath sent me to you.

Ham. You are welcome.

Guil. Nay, good my lord, this courtesy is not of the right breed. If it shall please you to make me a wholesome answer, I will do your mother's commandment: if not, your pardon and my return shall be the end of my business.

Ham. Sir, I cannot.

Guil. What, my lord?

Ham. Make you a wholesome answer; my wit's diseased: but, sir, such answer as I can make, you shall

command; or, rather, as you say, my mother: therefore no more, but to the matter: my mother, you say, —

Ros. Then thus she says; your behavior hath struck her into amazement and admiration.

Ham. O wonderful son, that can so astonish a mother! But is there no sequel at the heels of this mother's admiration?

Ros. She desires to speak with you in her closet, ere you go to bed.

Ham. We shall obey, were she ten times our mother. Have you any further trade with us?

Ros. My lord, you once did love me.

Ham. So I do still, by these pickers and stealers.

Ros. Good my lord, what is your cause of distemper? you do, surely, bar the door upon your own liberty, if you deny your griefs to your friend.

Ham. Sir, I lack advancement.

Ros. How can that be, when you have the voice of the king himself for your succession in Denmark?

Ham. Ay, but sir, 'While the grass grows,' — the proverb is something musty.

Re-enter Players *with recorders.*

O, the recorders! let me see one. To withdraw with you: — why do you go about to recover the wind of me, as if you would drive me into a toil?

Guil. O, my lord, if my duty be too bold, my love is too unmannerly.

Ham. I do not well understand that. Will you play upon this pipe?

Guil. My lord, I cannot.

Ham. I pray you.

Guil. Believe me, I cannot.

Ham. I do beseech you.

Guil. I know no touch of it, my lord.

Ham. 'T is as easy as lying: govern these ventages with your finger and thumb, give it breath with your mouth, and it will discourse most eloquent music. Look you, these are the stops.

Guil. But these cannot I command to any utterance of harmony; I have not the skill.

Ham. Why, look you now, how unworthy a thing you make of me! You would play upon me; you would seem to know my stops; you would pluck out the heart of my mystery; you would sound me from my lowest note to the top of my compass: and there is much music, excellent voice, in this little organ; yet cannot you make it speak. 'S blood, do you think I am easier to be played on than a pipe? Call me what instrument you will, though you can fret me, yet you cannot play upon me.

Enter Polonius.

God bless you, sir!

Pol. My lord, the queen would speak with you, and presently.

Ham. Do you see yonder cloud that 's almost in shape of a camel?

Pol. By the mass, and 't is like a camel, indeed.

Ham. Methinks it is like a weasel.

Pol. It is backed like a weasel.

Ham. Or like a whale?

Pol. Very like a whale.

Ham. Then I will come to my mother by and by. They fool me to the top of my bent. I will come by and by.

Pol. I will say so.

Ham. By and by is easily said. [*Exit Polonius.*
Leave me, friends. [*Exeunt all but Hamlet.*
'T is now the very witching time of night,
When churchyards yawn and hell itself breathes out
Contagion to this world: now could I drink hot blood,
And do such bitter business as the day
Would quake to look on. Soft! now to my mother.
O heart, lose not thy nature; let not ever
The soul of Nero enter this firm bosom:
Let me be cruel, not unnatural:
I will speak daggers to her, but use none;
My tongue and soul in this be hypocrites;
How in my words soever she be shent,
To give them seals never, my soul, consent! [*Exit.*

Scene III. *A room in the castle.*

Enter King, Rosencrantz, *and* Guildenstern.

King. I like him not, nor stands it safe with us
To let his madness range. Therefore prepare you;
I your commission will forthwith dispatch,
And he to England shall along with you:
The terms of our estate may not endure
Hazard so dangerous as doth hourly grow
Out of his lunacies.

Guil. We will ourselves provide:
Most holy and religious fear it is

To keep those many many bodies safe
That live and feed upon your majesty.

Ros. The single and peculiar life is bound,
With all the strength and armor of the mind,
To keep itself from noyance; but much more
That spirit upon whose weal depend and rest
The lives of many. The cease of majesty
Dies not alone; but, like a gulf, doth draw
What 's near it with it: it is a massy wheel,
Fixed on the summit of the highest mount,
To whose huge spokes ten thousand lesser things
Are mortised and adjoined; which, when it falls,
Each small annexment, petty consequence,
Attends the boisterous ruin. Never alone
Did the king sigh, but with a general groan.

King. Arm you, I pray you, to this speedy voyage;
For we will fetters put upon this fear,
Which now goes too free-footed.

Ros. }
Guil. } We will haste us.

[*Exeunt Rosencrantz and Guildenstern.*

Enter POLONIUS.

Pol. My lord, he 's going to his mother's closet:
Behind the arras I 'll convey myself,
To hear the process; I 'll warrant she 'll tax him home:
And, as you said, and wisely was it said,
'T is meet that some more audience than a mother,
Since nature makes them partial, should o'erhear
The speech, of vantage. Fare you well, my liege:
I 'll call upon you ere you go to bed,

And tell you what I know.

King. Thanks, dear my lord.

[*Exit Polonius.*

O, my offence is rank, it smells to heaven;
It hath the primal eldest curse upon 't,
A brother's murder. Pray can I not,
Though inclination be as sharp as will:
My stronger guilt defeats my strong intent;
And, like a man to double business bound,
I stand in pause where I shall first begin,
And both neglect. What if this cursed hand
Were thicker than itself with brother's blood,
Is there not rain enough in the sweet heavens
To wash it white as snow? Whereto serves mercy
But to confront the visage of offence?
And what 's in prayer but this two-fold force,
To be forestalled ere we come to fall,
Or pardoned being down? Then I 'll look up;
My fault is past. But, O, what form of prayer
Can serve my turn? 'Forgive me my foul murder'?
That cannot be; since I am still possessed
Of those effects for which I did the murder,
My crown, mine own ambition and my queen.
May one be pardoned and retain the offence?
In the corrupted currents of this world
Offence's gilded hand may shove by justice,
And oft 't is seen the wicked prize itself
Buys out the law: but 't is not so above;
There is no shuffling, there the action lies
In his true nature; and we ourselves compelled,
Even to the teeth and forehead of our faults,

Now might I do it pat, now he is praying.

— Act III. Scene 3.

To give in evidence. What then? what rests?
Try what repentance can: what can it not?
Yet what can it when one cannot repent?
O wretched state! O bosom black as death!
O limed soul, that, struggling to be free,
Art more engaged! Help, angels! Make assay!
Bow, stubborn knees; and, heart with strings of steel,
Be soft as sinews of the new-born babe!
All may be well. [*Retires and kneels.*

Enter HAMLET.

Ham. Now might I do it pat, now he is praying;
And now I 'll do 't. And so he goes to heaven;
And so am I revenged. That would be scanned:
A villain kills my father; and for that,
I, his sole son, do this same villain send
To heaven.
O, this is hire and salary, not revenge.
He took my father grossly, full of bread;
With all his crimes broad blown, as flush as May;
And how his audit stands who knows save heaven?
But in our circumstance and course of thought,
'T is heavy with him: and am I then revenged,
To take him in the purging of his soul,
When he is fit and seasoned for his passage?
No!
Up, sword; and know thou a more horrid hent:
When he is drunk asleep, or in his rage,
At gaming, swearing, or about some act
That has no relish of salvation in 't;
Then trip him, that his heels may kick at heaven,

And that his soul may be as damned and black
As hell, whereto it goes. My mother stays:
This physic but prolongs thy sickly days. [*Exit.*

King. [*Rising*] My words fly up, my thoughts remain below:
Words without thoughts never to heaven go. [*Exit.*

Scene IV. *The Queen's closet.*

Enter Queen *and* Polonius.

Pol. He will come straight. Look you lay home to him:
Tell him his pranks have been too broad to bear with,
And that your grace hath screened and stood between
Much heat and him. I 'll sconce me even here.
Pray you, be round with him.

Ham. [*Within*] Mother, mother, mother!

Queen. I 'll warrant you,
Fear me not: withdraw, I hear him coming.

[*Polonius hides behind the arras.*

Enter Hamlet.

Ham. Now, mother, what 's the matter?

Queen. Hamlet, thou hast thy father much offended.

Ham. Mother, you have my father much offended.

Queen. Come, come, you answer with an idle tongue.

Ham. Go, go, you question with a wicked tongue.

Queen. Why, how now, Hamlet!

Ham. What 's the matter now?

Queen. Have you forgot me?

Ham. No, by the rood, not so:

You are the queen, your husband's brother's wife;
And — would it were not so! — you are my mother.
Queen. Nay, then, I'll set those to you that can speak.
Ham. Come, come, and sit you down; you shall not budge;
You go not till I set you up a glass
Where you may see the inmost part of you.
Queen. What wilt thou do? thou wilt not murder me?
Help, help, ho!
Pol. [*Behind*] What, ho! help, help, help!
Ham. [*Drawing*] How now! a rat? Dead, for a ducat, dead! [*Makes a pass through the arras.*
Pol. [*Behind*] O, I am slain! [*Falls and dies.*
Queen. O me, what hast thou done?
Ham. Nay, I know not:
Is it the king?
Queen. O, what a rash and bloody deed is this!
Ham. A bloody deed! almost as bad, good mother,
As kill a king, and marry with his brother.
Queen. As kill a king!
Ham. Ay, lady, 't was my word.
[*Lifts up the arras and discovers Polonius.*
Thou wretched, rash, intruding fool, farewell!
I took thee for thy better: take thy fortune;
Thou find'st to be too busy is some danger.
Leave wringing of your hands: peace! sit you down,
And let me wring your heart; for so I shall,
If it be made of penetrable stuff,
If damned custom have not brassed it so
That it is proof and bulwark against sense.

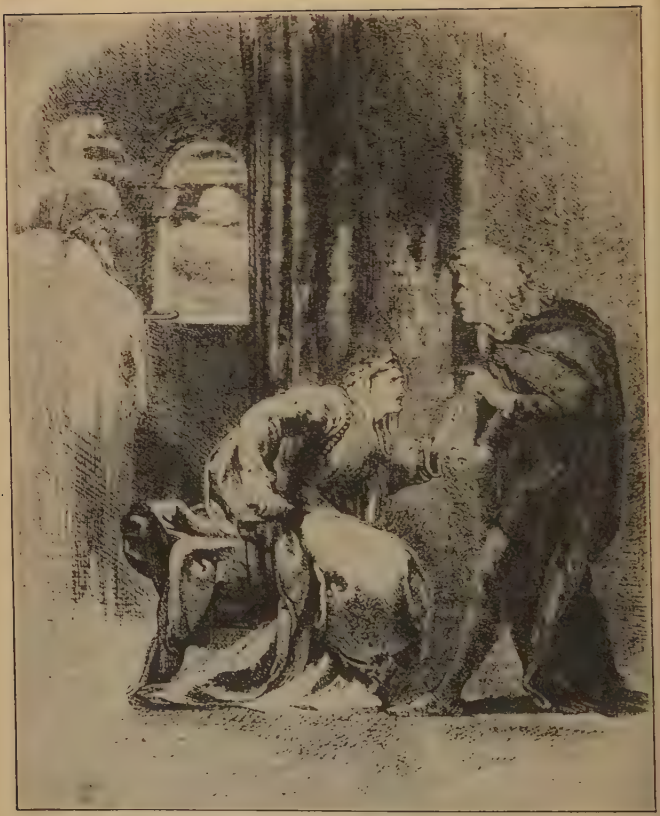
Queen. What have I done, that thou darest wag thy tongue
In noise so rude against me?
Ham. Such an act
That blurs the grace and blush of modesty,
Calls virtue hypocrite, takes off the rose
From the fair forehead of an innocent love
And sets a blister there; makes marriage-vows
As false as dicers' oaths: O, such a deed
As from the body of contraction plucks
The very soul, and sweet religion makes
A rhapsody of words: heaven's face doth glow;
Yea, this solidity and compound mass,
With tristful visage, as against the doom,
Is thought-sick at the act.
Queen. Ay me, what act,
That roars so loud, and thunders in the index?
Ham. Look here, upon this picture, and on this,
The counterfeit presentment of two brothers.
See, what a grace was seated on this brow;
Hyperion's curls; the front of Jove himself;
An eye like Mars, to threaten and command;
A station like the herald Mercury
New-lighted on a heaven-kissing hill;
A combination and a form indeed,
Where every god did seem to set his seal,
To give the world assurance of a man:
This was your husband. Look you now, what follows:
Here is your husband; like a mildewed ear,
Blasting his wholesome brother. Have you eyes?
Could you on this fair mountain leave to feed,

And batten on this moor? Ha! have you eyes?
You cannot call it love; for at your age
The hey-day in the blood is tame, it 's humble,
And waits upon the judgment: and what judgment
Would step from this to this? Sense, sure, you have,
Else could you not have motion; but sure, that sense
Is apoplexed; for madness would not err,
Nor sense to ecstasy was ne'er so thralled
But it reserved some quantity of choice,
To serve in such a difference. What devil was 't
That thus hath cozened you at hoodman-blind?
Eyes without feeling, feeling without sight,
Ears without hands or eyes, smelling sans all,
Or but a sickly part of one true sense
Could not so mope.
O shame! where is thy blush? Rebellious hell,
If thou canst mutine in a matron's bones,
To flaming youth let virtue be as wax,
And melt in her own fire: proclaim no shame
When the compulsive ardor gives the charge,
Since frost itself as actively doth burn
And reason panders will.
Queen. O Hamlet, speak no more:
Thou turn'st mine eyes into my very soul;
And there I see such black and grained spots
As will not leave their tinct.
Ham. Nay, but to live
Stewed in corruption, —
Queen. O, speak to me no more;
These words, like daggers, enter in mine ears;
No more, sweet Hamlet!

Ham. A murderer and a villain;
A slave that is not twentieth part the tithe
Of your precedent lord; a vice of kings;
A cutpurse of the empire and the rule,
That from a shelf the precious diadem stole,
And put it in his pocket!
Queen. No more!
Ham. A king of shreds and patches,—

Enter Ghost.

Save me, and hover o'er me with your wings,
Your heavenly guards! What would your gracious figure?
Queen. Alas, he 's mad!
Ham. Do you not come your tardy son to chide,
That, lapsed in time and passion, lets go by
The important acting of your dread command?
O, say!
Ghost. Do not forget: this visitation
Is but to whet thy almost blunted purpose.
But, look, amazement on thy mother sits:
O, step between her and her fighting soul:
Conceit in weakest bodies strongest works:
Speak to her, Hamlet.
Ham. How is it with you, lady?
Queen. Alas, how is 't with you,
That you do bend your eye on vacancy
And with the incorporal air do hold discourse?
Forth at your eyes your spirits wildly peep;
And, as the sleeping soldiers in the alarm,
Your bedded hair, like life in excrements,
Starts up, and stands an end. O gentle son,



On him, on him! Look you, how pale he glares!
— Act III. Scene 4.

Upon the heat and flame of thy distemper
Sprinkle cool patience. Whereon do you look?
Ham. On him, on him! Look you, how pale he glares!
His form and cause conjoined, preaching to stones,
Would make them capable. Do not look upon me;
Lest with this piteous action you convert
My stern effects: then what I have to do
Will want true color; tears perchance for blood.
Queen. To whom do you speak this?
Ham. Do you see nothing there?
Queen. Nothing at all; yet all that is I see.
Ham. Nor did you nothing hear?
Queen. No, nothing but ourselves.
Ham. Why, look you there! look, how it steals away!
My father, in his habit as he lived!
Look, where he goes, even now, out at the portal!
[*Exit Ghost.*
Queen. This is the very coinage of your brain:
This bodiless creation ecstasy
Is very cunning in.
Ham. Ecstasy!
My pulse, as yours, doth temperately keep time,
And makes as healthful music: it is not madness
That I have uttered: bring me to the test,
And I the matter will re-word; which madness
Would gambol from. Mother, for love of grace,
Lay not that flattering unction to your soul,
That not your trespass, but my madness speaks:
It will but skin and film the ulcerous place,
Whilst rank corruption, mining all within,
Infects unseen. Confess yourself to heaven;

Repent what 's past; avoid what is to come;
And do not spread the compost on the weeds,
To make them ranker. Forgive me this my virtue;
For in the fatness of these pursy times
Virtue itself of vice must pardon beg,
Yea, curb and woo for leave to do him good.
Queen. O Hamlet, thou hast cleft my heart in twain.
Ham. O, throw away the worser part of it,
And live the purer with the other half.
Good night:
Assume a virtue, if you have it not.
That monster, custom, who all sense doth eat,
Of habits devil, is angel yet in this,
That to the use of actions fair and good
He likewise gives a frock or livery,
That aptly is put on. —
Once more, good night:
And when you are desirous to be blessed,
I 'll blessing beg of you. For this same lord,
[*Pointing to Polonius.*
I do repent: but heaven hath pleased it so,
To punish me with this and this with me,
That I must be their scourge and minister.
I will bestow him, and will answer well
The death I gave him. So, again, good night.
I must be cruel, only to be kind:
Thus bad begins and worse remains behind.
One word more, good lady.
Queen. What shall I do?
Ham. Not this, by no means, that I bid you do:
Let the bloat king, for a pair of reechy kisses,

Make you to ravel all this matter out,
That I essentially am not in madness,
But mad in craft. 'T were good you let him know;
For who, that 's but a queen, fair, sober, wise,
Would from a paddock, from a bat, a gib,
Such dear concernings hide? who would do so?
No, in despite of sense and secrecy,
Unpeg the basket on the house's top,
Let the birds fly, and, like the famous ape,
To try conclusions, in the basket creep,
And break your own neck down.

Queen. Be thou assured, if words be made of breath,
And breath of life, I have no life to breathe
What thou hast said to me.

Ham. I must to England; you know that?

Queen. Alack,
I had forgot: 't is so concluded on.

Ham. There 's letters sealed: and my two schoolfellows,
Whom I will trust as I will adders fanged,
They bear the mandate; they must sweep my way,
And marshal me to knavery. Let it work;
For 't is the sport to have the enginer
Hoist with his own petar: and 't shall go hard
But I will delve one yard below their mines,
And blow them at the moon: O, 't is most sweet,
When in one line two crafts directly meet.
This man shall set me packing:
I 'll lug the guts into the neighbor room.
Mother, good night. Indeed this counsellor
Is now most still, most secret and most grave,

Who was in life a foolish prating knave.
Come, sir, to draw toward an end with you.
Good night, mother.

[*Exeunt severally*; *Hamlet dragging in Polonius.*

ACT IV.

SCENE I. *A room in the Castle.*

Enter KING, QUEEN, ROSENCRANTZ, *and* GUILDENSTERN.

King. There 's matter in these sighs; these profound heaves
You must translate: 't is fit we understand them.
Where is your son?

Queen. Bestow this place on us a little while.

[*Exeunt Rosencrantz and Guildenstern.*

Ah, my good lord, what have I seen to-night!

King. What, Gertrude? How does Hamlet?

Queen. Mad as the sea and wind, when both contend
Which is the mightier: in his lawless fit,
Behind the arras hearing something stir,
Whips out his rapier, cries, 'A rat, a rat!'
And, in this brainish apprehension, kills
The unseen good old man.

King. O heavy deed!
It had been so with us, had we been there:
His liberty is full of threats to all;
To you yourself, to us, to every one.
Alas, how shall this bloody deed be answered?
It will be laid to us, whose providence

Should have kept short, restrained and out of haunt,
This mad young man: but so much was our love,
We would not understand what was most fit;
But, like the owner of a foul disease,
To keep it from divulging, let it feed
Even on the pith of life. Where is he gone?

Queen. To draw apart the body he hath killed:
O'er whom his very madness, like some ore
Among a mineral of metals base,
Shows itself pure; he weeps for what is done.

King. O Gertrude, come away!
The sun no sooner shall the mountains touch,
But we will ship him hence: and this vile deed
We must, with all our majesty and skill,
Both countenance and excuse. Ho, Guildenstern!

Re-enter ROSENCRANTZ *and* GUILDENSTERN.

Friends both, go join you with some further aid:
Hamlet in madness hath Polonius slain,
And from his mother's closet hath he dragged him:
Go seek him out; speak fair, and bring the body
Into the chapel. I pray you, haste in this.

[*Exeunt Rosencrantz and Guildenstern.*

Come, Gertrude, we 'll call up our wisest friends;
And let them know, both what we mean to do,
And what 's untimely done. So, haply, slander, —
Whose whisper o'er the world's diameter,
As level as the cannon to his blank,
Transports his poisoned shot, may miss our name,
And hit the woundless air. O, come away!
My soul is full of discord and dismay. [*Exeunt.*

SCENE II. *Another room in the castle.*

Enter HAMLET.

Ham. Safely stowed.

Ros. } [*Within*] Hamlet! Lord Hamlet!
Guil. }

Ham. What noise? who calls on Hamlet? O, here they come.

Enter ROSENCRANTZ *and* GUILDENSTERN.

Ros. What have you done, my lord, with the dead body? 5

Ham. Compounded it with dust, whereto 't is kin.

Ros. Tell us where 't is, that we may take it thence And bear it to the chapel.

Ham. Do not believe it.

Ros. Believe what? 10

Ham. That I can keep your counsel and not mine own. Besides, to be demanded of a sponge, what replication should be made by the son of a king?

Ros. Take you me for a sponge, my lord? 14

Ham. Ay, sir, that soaks up the king's countenance, his rewards, his authorities. But such officers do the king best service in the end: he keeps them, like an ape doth nuts, in the corner of his jaw; first mouthed, to be last swallowed: when he needs what you have gleaned, it is but squeezing you, and, sponge, you shall be dry again. 21

Ros. I understand you not, my lord.

Ham. I am glad of it: a knavish speech sleeps in a foolish ear. 24

Ros. My lord, you must tell us where the body is, and go with us to the king.

Ham. The body is with the king, but the king is not with the body. The king is a thing —

Guil. A thing, my lord!

Ham. Of nothing: bring me to him. Hide fox, and all after. [*Exeunt.*

SCENE III. *Another room in the castle.*

Enter KING, *attended.*

King. I have sent to seek him, and to find the body.
How dangerous is it that this man goes loose!
Yet must not we put the strong law on him:
He 's loved of the distracted multitude,
Who like not in their judgment, but their eyes:
And where 't is so, the offender's scourge is weighed,
But never the offence. To bear all smooth and even,
This sudden sending him away must seem
Deliberate pause: diseases desperate grown
By desperate appliance are relieved,
Or not at all.

Enter ROSENCRANTZ.

How now! what hath befallen?

Ros. Where the dead body is bestowed, my lord, We cannot get from him.

King. But where is he?

Ros. Without, my lord; guarded, to know your pleasure.

King. Bring him before us.

Ros. Ho, Guildenstern! bring in my lord.

Enter HAMLET *and* GUILDENSTERN.

King. Now, Hamlet, where 's Polonius?

Ham. At supper.

King. At supper! where?

Ham. Not where he eats, but where he is eaten: a certain convocation of politic worms are e'en at him. Your worm is your only emperor for diet: we fat all creatures else to fat us, and we fat ourselves for maggots: your fat king and your lean beggar is but variable service, two dishes, but to one table: that 's the end.

King. Alas, alas!

Ham. A man may fish with the worm that hath eat of a king, and eat of the fish that hath fed of that worm.

King. What dost thou mean by this?

Ham. Nothing but to show you how a king may go a progress through the body of a beggar.

King. Where is Polonius?

Ham. In heaven; send thither to see: if your messenger find him not there, seek him i' the other place yourself. But indeed, if you find him not within this month, you shall nose him as you go up the stairs into the lobby.

King. Go seek him there.

[*To some Attendants.*

Ham. He will stay till ye come.

[*Exeunt Attendants.*

King. Hamlet, this deed, for thine especial safety, —
Which we do tender, as we dearly grieve
For that which thou hast done, — must send thee hence

With fiery quickness: therefore prepare thyself;
The bark is ready, and the wind at help,
The associates tend, and everything is bent
For England.

Ham. For England!

King. Ay, Hamlet.

Ham. Good.

King. So is it, if thou knew'st our purposes.

Ham. I see a cherub that sees them. But, come; for England! Farewell, dear mother.

King. Thy loving father, Hamlet.

Ham. My mother: father and mother is man and wife; man and wife is one flesh; and so, my mother. Come, for England! [*Exit.*

King. Follow him at foot; tempt him with speed abroad;
Delay it not; I 'll have him hence to-night.
Away! for every thing is sealed and done
That else leans on the affair: pray you, make haste.
[*Exeunt Rosencrantz and Guildenstern.*
And, England, if my love thou hold'st at aught —
As my great power thereof may give thee sense,
Since yet thy cicatrice looks raw and red
After the Danish sword, and thy free awe
Pays homage to us — thou mayst not coldly set
Our sovereign process; which imports at full,
By letters conjuring to that effect,
The present death of Hamlet. Do it, England;
For like the hectic in my blood he rages,
And thou must cure me: till I know 't is done,
Howe'er my haps, my joys were ne'er begun. [*Exit.*

SCENE IV. *A plain in Denmark.*

Enter FORTINBRAS, *a* Captain, *and* Soldiers, *marching*

For. Go, captain, from me greet the Danish king;
Tell him that, by his license, Fortinbras
Craves the conveyance of a promised march
Over his kingdom. You know the rendezvous
If that his majesty would aught with us,
We shall express our duty in his eye;
And let him know so.

Cap. I will do 't, my lord.

For. Go softly on. [*Exeunt Fortinbras and Soldiers.*

Enter HAMLET, ROSENCRANTZ, GUILDENSTERN, *and others.*

Ham. Good sir, whose powers are these?

Cap. They are of Norway, sir.

Ham. How purposed, sir, I pray you?

Cap. Against some part of Poland.

Ham. Who commands them, sir?

Cap. The nephew to old Norway, Fortinbras.

Ham. Goes it against the main of Poland, sir,
Or for some frontier?

Cap. Truly to speak, and with no addition,
We go to gain a little patch of ground
That hath in it no profit but the name.
To pay five ducats, five, I would not farm it;
Nor will it yield to Norway of the Pole
A ranker rate, should it be sold in fee.

Ham. Why, then the Polack never will defend it.

Cap. Yes, it is already garrisoned.

Ham. Two thousand souls and twenty thousand ducats

Will not debate the question of this straw:
This is the imposthume of much wealth and peace,
That inward breaks, and shows no cause without
Why the man dies. I humbly thank you, sir.
Cap. God be wi' you sir. [*Exit.*
Ros. Will 't please you go, my lord?
Ham. I 'll be with you straight. Go a little before.
[*Exeunt all except Hamlet.*
How all occasions do inform against me,
And spur my dull revenge! What is a man,
If his chief good and market of his time
Be but to sleep and feed? a beast, no more.
Sure, he that made us with such large discourse,
Looking before and after, gave us not
That capability and god-like reason
To fust in us unused. Now, whether it be
Bestial oblivion, or some craven scruple
Of thinking too precisely on the event,
A thought which, quartered, hath but one part wisdom
And ever three parts coward, I do not know
Why yet I live to say 'This thing 's to do;'
Sith I have cause and will and strength and means
To do 't. Examples gross as earth exhort me:
Witness this army of such mass and charge
Led by a delicate and tender prince,
Whose spirit with divine ambition puffed
Makes mouths at the invisible event,
Exposing what is mortal and unsure
To all that fortune, death and danger dare,
Even for an egg-shell. Rightly to be great
Is not to stir without great argument,

But greatly to find quarrel in a straw
When honor 's at the stake. How stand I then,
That have a father killed, a mother stained,
Excitements of my reason and my blood,
And let all sleep, while, to my shame, I see
The imminent death of twenty thousand men,
That, for a fantasy and trick of fame,
Go to their graves like beds, fight for a plot
Whereon the numbers cannot try the cause,
Which is not tomb enough and continent
To hide the slain? O, from this time forth,
My thoughts be bloody, or be nothing worth! [*Exit.*

SCENE V. *Elsinore. A room in the castle.*

Enter QUEEN, HORATIO, *and a* Gentleman.

Queen. I will not speak with her.

Gent. She is importunate, indeed distract:
Her mood will needs be pitied.

Queen. What would she have?

Gent. She speaks much of her father; says she hears
There 's tricks i' the world; and hems, and beats her heart;
Spurns enviously at straws; speaks things in doubt,
That carry but half sense: her speech is nothing,
Yet the unshaped use of it doth move
The hearers to collection; they aim at it,
And botch the words up fit to their own thoughts;
Which, as her winks, and nods, and gestures yield them,
Indeed would make one think there might be thought,
Though nothing sure, yet much unhappily.

Hor. 'T were good she were spoken with; for she may strew
Dangerous conjectures in ill-breeding minds.
Queen. Let her come in. [*Exit Horatio.*
To my sick soul, as sin's true nature is,
Each toy seems prologue to some great amiss:
So full of artless jealousy is guilt,
It spills itself in fearing to be spilt.

Re-enter HORATIO, *with* OPHELIA.

Oph. Where is the beauteous majesty of Denmark?
Queen. How now, Ophelia!
Oph. [*Sings*] How should I your true love know
From another one?
By his cockle hat and staff,
And his sandal shoon.
Queen. Alas, sweet lady, what imports this song?
Oph. Say you? nay, pray you, mark.
[*Sings*] He is dead and gone, lady,
He is dead and gone;
At his head a grass-green turf,
At his heels a stone.
Queen. Nay, but, Ophelia, —
Oph. Pray you, mark.
[*Sings*] White his shroud as the mountain snow, —

Enter KING.

Queen. Alas, look here, my lord.
Oph. [*Sings*] Larded with sweet flowers;
Which bewept to the grave did go
With true-love showers.

King. How do you, pretty lady?

Oph. Well, God 'ild you! They say the owl was a baker's daughter. Lord, we know what we are, but know not what we may be. God be at your table!

King. Conceit upon her father.

Oph. Pray you, let 's have no words of this; but when they ask you what it means, say you this:

[*Sings*] To-morrow is Saint Valentine's day,
All in the morning betime,
And I a maid at your window,
To be your Valentine.

King. How long hath she been thus?

Oph. I hope all will be well. We must be patient: but I cannot choose but weep, to think they should lay him i' the cold ground. My brother shall know of it: and so I thank you for your good counsel. Come, my coach! Good night, ladies; good night, sweet ladies; good night, good night. [*Exit.*

King. Follow her close; give her good watch, I pray you. [*Exit Horatio.*

O, this is the poison of deep grief; it springs
All from her father's death. O Gertrude, Gertrude
When sorrows come, they come not single spies,
But in battalions. First, her father slain:
Next, your son gone; and he most violent author
Of his own just remove: the people muddied,
Thick and unwholesome in their thoughts and whispers,
For good Polonius' death; and we have done but greenly,
In hugger-mugger to inter him: poor Ophelia
Divided from herself and her fair judgment,

Without the which we are pictures, or mere beasts:
Last, and as much containing as all these,
Her brother is in secret come from France;
Feeds on his wonder, keeps himself in clouds,
And wants not buzzers to infect his ear
With pestilent speeches of his father's death;
Wherein necessity, of matter beggared,
Will nothing stick our person to arraign
In ear and ear. O my dear Gertrude, this,
Like to a murdering-piece, in many places
Gives me superfluous death. [*A noise within.*

Queen. Alack, what noise is this?

King. Where are my Switzers? Let them guard the door.

Enter another Gentleman.

What is the matter?

Gent. Save yourself, my lord:
The ocean, overpeering of his list,
Eats not the flats with more impetuous haste
Than young Laertes, in a riotous head,
O'erbears your officers. The rabble call him lord;
And, as the world were now but to begin,
Antiquity forgot, custom not known,
The ratifiers and props of every word,
They cry 'Choose we: Laertes shall be king:'
Caps, hands, and tongues, applaud it to the clouds:
'Laertes shall be king, Laertes king!'

Queen. How cheerfully on the false trail they cry!
O, this is counter, you false Danish dogs!

King. The doors are broke. [*Noise within.*

Enter LAERTES, *armed;* Danes *following.*

Laer. Where is this king? Sirs, stand you all without.

Danes. No, let 's come in.

Laer. I pray you, give me leave.

Danes. We will, we will. [*They retire without the door.*

Laer. I thank you: keep the door. O thou vile king,
Give me my father!

Queen. Calmly, good Laertes.

Laer. That drop of blood that 's calm proclaims me bastard,
Cries cuckold to my father, brands the harlot
Even here, between the chaste unsmirched brow
Of my true mother.

King. What is the cause, Laertes,
That thy rebellion looks so giant-like?
Let him go, Gertrude; do not fear our person:
There 's such divinity doth hedge a king,
That treason can but peep to what it would,
Acts little of his will. Tell me, Laertes,
Why thou art thus incensed. Let him go, Gertrude.
Speak, man.

Laer. Where is my father?

King. Dead.

Queen. But not by him.

King. Let him demand his fill.

Laer. How came he dead? I 'll not be juggled with:
To hell, allegiance! vows, to the blackest devil!
Conscience and grace, to the profoundest pit!
I dare damnation. To this point I stand,

That both the worlds I give to negligence,
Let come what comes; only I 'll be revenged
Most throughly for my father.
King. Who shall stay you?
Laer. My will, not all the world:
And for my means, I 'll husband them so well,
They shall go far with little.
King. Good Laertes,
If you desire to know the certainty
Of your dear father's death, is 't writ in your revenge,
That, swoopstake, you will draw both friend and foe,
Winner and loser?
Laer. None but his enemies.
King. Will you know them then?
Laer. To his good friends thus wide I 'll ope my arms;
And like the kind life-rendering pelican,
Repast them with my blood.
King. Why, now you speak
Like a good child and a true gentleman.
That I am guiltless of your father's death,
And am most sensibly in grief for it,
It shall as level to your judgment pierce
As day does to your eye.
Danes. [*Within*] Let her come in.
Laer. How now! what noise is that?

Re-enter OPHELIA.

O heat, dry up my brains! tears seven times salt,
Burn out the sense and virtue of mine eye!
By heaven, thy madness shall be paid by weight,
Till our scale turn the beam. O rose of May!

Dear maid, kind sister, sweet Ophelia!
O heavens! is 't possible, a young maid's wits
Should be as mortal as an old man's life?
Nature is fine in love, and where 't is fine,
It sends some precious instance of itself
After the thing it loves.

Oph. [*Sings*]
They bore him barefaced on the bier;
Hey non nonny, nonny, hey nonny;
And in his grave rained many a tear: —
Fare you well, my dove!

Laer. Hadst thou thy wits, and didst persuade revenge,
It could not move thus.

Oph. [*Sings*] You must sing a-down a-down,
An you call him a-down-a.
O, how the wheel becomes it! It is the false steward, that stole his master's daughter.

Laer. This nothing 's more than matter.

Oph. There 's rosemary, that 's for remembrance; pray, love, remember: and there is pansies, that 's for thoughts.

Laer. A document in madness, thoughts and remembrance fitted.

Oph. There 's fennel for you, and columbines: there 's rue for you; and here 's some for me: we may call it herb of grace o' Sundays: O, you must wear your rue with a difference. There 's a daisy: I would give you some violets, but they withered all when my father died; they say he made a good end, —

[*Sings*] For bonny sweet Robin is all my joy.

Laer. Thought and affliction, passion, hell itself,
She turns to favor and to prettiness.

There's rosemary, that's for remembrance.
— Act IV. Scene 5.

Oph. [*Sings*] And will he not come again?
And will he not come again?
No, no, he is dead:
Go to thy death-bed:
He never will come again.

His beard was as white as snow,
All flaxen was his poll:
He is gone, he is gone,
And we cast away moan:
God ha' mercy on his soul!

And of all Christian souls, I pray God. God be wi' ye.
[*Exit.*

Laer. Do you see this, O God?

King. Laertes, I must commune with your grief,
Or you deny me right. Go but apart,
Make choice of whom your wisest friends you will,
And they shall hear and judge 'twixt you and me:
If by direct or by collateral hand
They find us touched, we will our kingdom give,
Our crown, our life, and all that we call ours,
To you in satisfaction; but if not,
Be you content to lend your patience to us,
And we shall jointly labor with your soul
To give it due content.

Laer. Let this be so;
His means of death, his obscure funeral —
No trophy, sword, nor hatchment o'er his bones,
No noble rite nor formal ostentation —
Cry to be heard, as 't were from heaven to earth,
That I must call 't in question.

King. So you shall;
And where the offence is let the great axe fall.
I pray you, go with me. [*Exeunt.*

SCENE VI. *Another room in the castle.*

Enter HORATIO *and a* Servant.

Hor. What are they that would speak with me?
Serv. Sailors, sir: they say they have letters for you.
Hor. Let them come in. [*Exit Servant.*
I do not know from what part of the world
I should be greeted, if not from Lord Hamlet.

Enter Sailors.

First Sail. God bless you, sir.
Hor. Let him bless thee too.
First Sail. He shall, sir, an't please him. There's a letter for you, sir: it comes from the ambassador that was bound for England; if your name be Horatio, as I am let to know it is.

Hor. [*Reads*] 'Horatio, when thou shalt have overlooked this, give these fellows some means to the king: they have letters for him. Ere we were two days old at sea, a pirate of very warlike appointment gave us chase. Finding ourselves too slow of sail, we put on a compelled valor, and in the grapple I boarded them: on the instant they got clear of our ship; so I alone became their prisoner. They have dealt with me like thieves of mercy: but they knew what they did; I am to do a good turn for them. Let the king have the letters I have sent; and repair thou to me with as much speed as thou wouldst fly death. I have words to speak in thine ear

will make thee dumb; yet are they much too light for the bore of the matter. These good fellows will bring thee where I am. Rosencrantz and Guildenstern hold their course for England: of them I have much to tell thee. Farewell.

'He that thou knowest thine, HAMLET.'

Come, I will make you way for these your letters;
And do 't the speedier, that you may direct me
To him from whom you brought them. [*Exeunt.*

SCENE VII. *Another room in the castle.*

Enter KING *and* LAERTES.

King. Now must your conscience my acquittance seal,
And you must put me in your heart for friend,
Sith you have heard, and with a knowing ear,
That he which hath your noble father slain
Pursued my life.

Laer. It well appears: but tell me
Why you proceeded not against these feats,
So crimeful and so capital in nature,
As by your safety, wisdom, all things else,
You mainly were stirred up.

King. O, for two special reasons;
Which may to you, perhaps, seem much unsinewed,
But yet to me they are strong. The queen his mother
Lives almost by his looks; and for myself —
My virtue or my plague, be it either which —
She 's so conjunctive to my life and soul,
That, as the star moves not but in his sphere,
I could not but by her. The other motive,
Why to a public count I might not go,

Is the great love the general gender bear him;
Who, dipping all his faults in their affection,
Would, like the spring that turneth wood to stone,
Convert his gyves to graces; so that my arrows,
Too slightly timbered for so loud a wind,
Would have reverted to my bow again,
And not where I had aimed them.

Laer. And so have I a noble father lost;
A sister driven into desperate terms,
Whose worth, if praises may go back again,
Stood challenger on mount of all the age
For her perfections: but my revenge will come.

King. Break not your sleeps for that: you must not think
That we are made of stuff so flat and dull
That we can let our beard be shook with danger
And think it pastime. You shortly shall hear more:
I loved your father, and we love ourself;
And that, I hope, will teach you to imagine —

Enter a Messenger.

How now! what news?

Mess. Letters, my lord, from Hamlet:
This to your majesty; this to the queen.

King. From Hamlet! who brought them?

Mes. Sailors, my lord, they say; I saw them not:
They were given me by Claudio; he received them
Of him that brought them.

King. Laertes, you shall hear them.
Leave us. [*Exit Messenger.*

[*Reads*] 'High and mighty, You shall know I am set

naked on your kingdom. To-morrow shall I beg leave to see your kingly eyes: when I shall, first asking your pardon thereunto, recount the occasion of my sudden and more strange return.

'HAMLET.'

What should this mean? Are all the rest come back?
Or is it some abuse, and no such thing?

Laer. Know you the hand?

King. 'T is Hamlet's character. 'Naked!'
And in a postscript here, he says 'alone.'
Can you advise me?

Laer. I'm lost in it, my lord. But let him come;
It warms the very sickness in my heart,
That I shall live and tell him to his teeth,
'Thus didest thou.'

King. If it be so, Laertes —
As how should it be so? how otherwise? —
Will you be ruled by me?

Laer. Ay, my lord;
So you will not o'errule me to a peace.

King. To thine own peace. If he be now returned,
As checking at his voyage, and that he means
No more to undertake it, I will work him
To an exploit, now ripe in my device,
Under the which he shall not choose but fall:
And for his death no wind of blame shall breathe,
But even his mother shall uncharge the practice
And call it accident.

Laer. My lord, I will be ruled;
The rather, if you could devise it so
That I might be the organ.

King. It falls right.
You have been talked of since your travel much,
And that in Hamlet's hearing, for a quality
Wherein, they say, you shine: your sum of parts
Did not together pluck such envy from him
As did that one, and that, in my regard,
Of the unworthiest siege.

Laer. What part is that, my lord?

King. A very riband in the cap of youth,
Yet needful too; for youth no less becomes
The light and careless livery that it wears
Than settled age his sables and his weeds,
Importing health and graveness. Two months since,
Here was a gentleman of Normandy: —
I've seen myself, and served against, the French,
And they can well on horseback: but this gallant
Had witchcraft in 't; he grew unto his seat;
And to such wondrous doing brought his horse,
As he had been incorpsed and demi-natured
With the brave beast: so far he topped my thought,
That I, in forgery of shapes and tricks,
Come short of what he did.

Laer. A Norman was 't?

King. A Norman.

Laer. Upon my life, Lamond.

King. The very same.

Laer. I know him well: he is the brooch indeed
And gem of all the nation.

King. He made confession of you,
And gave you such a masterly report
For art and exercise in your defence

And for your rapier most especially,
That he cried out, 't would be a sight indeed,
If one could match you: the scrimers of their nation,
He swore, had neither motion, guard, nor eye,
If you opposed them. Sir, this report of his
Did Hamlet so envenom with his envy
That he could nothing do but wish and beg
Your sudden coming o'er, to play with him.
Now, out of this,—
Laer. What out of this, my lord?
King. Laertes, was your father dear to you?
Or are you like the painting of a sorrow,
A face without a heart?
Laer. Why ask you this?
King. Not that I think you did not love your father;
But that I know love is begun by time;
And that I see, in passages of proof,
Time qualifies the spark and fire of it.
There lives within the very flame of love
A kind of wick or snuff that will abate it;
And nothing is at a like goodness still;
For goodness, growing to a plurisy,
Dies in his own too much: that we would do,
We should do when we would; for this 'would' changes
And hath abatements and delays as many
As there are tongues, are hands, are accidents;
And then this 'should' is like a spendthrift sigh,
That hurts by easing. But, to the quick o' the ulcer:—
Hamlet comes back: what would you undertake,
To show yourself your father's son in deed
More than in words?

Laer. To cut his throat i' the church.

King. No place, indeed, should murder sanctuarize;
Revenge should have no bounds. But, good Laertes,
Will you do this, keep close within your chamber.
Hamlet returned shall know you are come home:
We 'll put on those shall praise your excellence
And set a double varnish on the fame
The Frenchman gave you, bring you in fine together
And wager on your heads: he, being remiss,
Most generous and free from all contriving,
Will not peruse the foils; so that, with ease,
Or with a little shuffling, you may choose
A sword unbated, and in a pass of practice
Requite him for your father.

Laer. I will do 't:
And, for that purpose, I 'll anoint my sword.
I bought an unction of a mountebank,
So mortal that, but dip a knife in it,
Where it draws blood no cataplasm so rare,
Collected from all simples that have virtue
Under the moon, can save the thing from death
That is but scratched withal: I 'll touch my point
With this contagion, that, if I gall him slightly,
It may be death.

King. Let 's further think of this;
Weigh what convenience both of time and means
May fit us to our shape: if this should fail,
And that our drift look through our bad performance,
'T were better not assayed: therefore this project
Should have a back or second, that might hold,
If this should blast in proof. Soft! let me see:

We 'll make a solemn wager on your cunnings: I ha't:
When in your motion you are hot and dry —
As make your bouts more violent to that end —
And that he calls for drink, I 'll have prepared him
A chalice for the nonce, whereon but sipping,
If he by chance escape your venomed stuck,
Our purpose may hold there.

Enter QUEEN.

How now, sweet queen!

Queen. One woe doth tread upon another's heels
So fast they follow: your sister's drowned, Laertes.

Laer. Drowned! O, where?

Queen. There is a willow grows aslant a brook,
That shows his hoar leaves in the glassy stream;
There with fantastic garlands did she come
Of crow-flowers, nettles, daisies, and long purples
That liberal shepherds give a grosser name,
But our cold maids do dead men's fingers call them:
There, on the pendent boughs her coronet weeds
Clambering to hang, an envious sliver broke;
When down her weedy trophies and herself
Fell in the weeping brook. Her clothes spread wide;
And, mermaid-like, awhile they bore her up:
Which time she chanted snatches of old tunes;
As one incapable of her own distress,
Or like a creature native and indued
Unto that element: but long it could not be
Till that her garments, heavy with their drink,
Pulled the poor wretch from her melodious lay

To muddy death.

Laer. Alas, then, she is drowned?

Queen. Drowned, drowned.

Laer. Too much of water hast thou, poor Ophelia,
And therefore I forbid my tears: but yet
It is our trick; nature her custom holds,
Let shame say what it will: when these are gone,
The woman will be out. Adieu, my lord:
I have a speech of fire, that fain would blaze,
But that this folly douts it. [*Exit.*

King. Let 's follow, Gertrude:
How much I had to do to calm his rage!
Now fear I this will give it start again;
Therefore let 's follow. [*Exeunt.*

ACT V.

Scene I. *A churchyard.*

Enter two Clowns, *with spades, &c.*

First Clo. Is she to be buried in Christian burial that wilfully seeks her own salvation?

Sec. Clo. I tell thee she is: and therefore make her grave straight: the crowner hath sat on her, and finds it Christian burial.

First Clo. How can that be, unless she drowned herself in her own defence?

Sec. Clo. Why, 't is found so.

First Clo. It must be 'se offendendo;' it cannot be else. For here lies the point: if I drown myself wittingly, it argues an act: and an act hath three branches;

it is, to act, to do, to perform: argal, she drowned herself wittingly.

Sec. Clo. Nay, but hear you, goodman delver, —

First Clo. Give me leave. Here lies the water; good: here stands the man; good: if the man go to this water, and drown himself, it is, will he, nill he, he goes, — mark you that; but if the water come to him and drown him, he drowns not himself: argal, he that is not guilty of his own death shortens not his own life.

Sec. Clo. But is this law?

First Clo. Ay, marry, is 't; crowner's quest law.

Sec. Clo. Will you ha' the truth on 't? If this had not been a gentlewoman, she should have been buried out o' Christian burial.

First Clo. Why, there thou say'st: and the more pity that great folk should have countenance in this world to drown or hang themselves, more than their even Christian. Come, my spade. There is no ancient gentlemen but gardeners, ditchers, and grave-makers: they hold up Adam's profession.

Sec. Clo. Was he a gentleman?

First Clo. He was the first that ever bore arms.

Sec. Clo. Why, he had none.

First Clo. What, art a heathen? How dost thou understand the Scripture? The Scripture says 'Adam digged:' could he dig without arms? I 'll put another question to thee: if thou answerest me not to the purpose, confess thyself —

Sec. Clo. Go to.

First Clo. What is he that builds stronger than either the mason, the shipwright, or the carpenter?

Sec. Clo. The gallows-maker; for that frame outlives a thousand tenants.

First Clo. I like thy wit well, in good faith: the gallows does well; but how does it well? it does well to those that do ill: now thou dost ill to say the gallows is built stronger than the church: argal, the gallows may do well to thee. To 't again, come.

Sec. Clo. 'Who builds stronger than a mason, a shipwright, or a carpenter?'

First Clo. Ay, tell me that, and unyoke.

Sec. Clo. Marry, now I can tell.

First Clo. To 't.

Sec. Clo. Mass, I cannot tell.

Enter HAMLET *and* HORATIO, *at a distance.*

First Clo. Cudgel thy brains no more about it, for your dull ass will not mend his pace with beating; and, when you are asked this question next, say 'a grave-maker:' the houses that he makes last till doomsday. Go, get thee to Yaughan: fetch me a stoup of liquor.

[*He digs, and sings.*] [*Exit Sec. Clown.*

In youth, when I did love, did love,
Methought it was very sweet,
To contract, O, the time, for, ah, my behove,
O, methought, there was nothing meet.

Ham. Has this fellow no feeling of his business, that he sings at grave-making?

Hor. Custom hath made it in him a property of easiness.

Ham. 'T is e'en so: the hand of little employment hath the daintier sense.

'A grave-maker:' the houses that he makes last till doomsday.

— Act V. Scene 1.

First Clo. [*Sings*]

But age, with his stealing steps,
Hath clawed me in his clutch,
And hath shipped me intil the land,
As if I had never been such.

[*Throws up a skull.*

Ham. That skull had a tongue in it, and could sing once: how the knave jowls it to the ground, as if it were Cain's jaw-bone, that did the first murder! It might be the pate of a politician, which this ass now o'er-reaches; one that would circumvent God, might it not?

Hor. It might, my lord.

Ham. Or of a courtier; which could say 'Good morrow, sweet lord! How dost thou, good lord?' This might be my lord such-a-one, that praised my lord such-a-one's horse, when he meant to beg it; might it not?

Hor. Ay, my lord.

Ham. Why, e'en so: and now my Lady Worm's; chapless, and knocked about the mazzard with a sexton's spade: here 's fine revolution, an we had the trick to see 't. Did these bones cost no more the breeding, but to play at loggats with 'em? Mine ache to think on 't.

First Clo. [*Sings*]

A pick-axe, and a spade, a spade,
For and a shrouding sheet:
O, a pit of clay for to be made
For such a guest is meet.

[*Throws up another skull.*

Ham. There 's another: why may not that be the skull of a lawyer? Where be his quiddities now, his quillets, his cases, his tenures, and his tricks? why does

he suffer this rude knave now to knock him about the sconce with a dirty shovel, and will not tell him of his action of battery? Hum! This fellow might be in 's time a great buyer of land, with his statutes, his recognizances, his fines, his double vouchers, his recoveries: is this the fine of his fines, and the recovery of his recoveries, to have his fine pate full of fine dirt? Will his vouchers vouch him no more of his purchases, and double ones too, than the length and breadth of a pair of indentures? The very conveyances of his lands will hardly lie in this box; and must the inheritor himself have no more, ha?

Hor. Not a jot more, my lord.

Ham. Is not parchment made of sheep-skins?

Hor. Ay, my lord, and of calf-skins too.

Ham. They are sheep and calves which seek out assurance in that. I will speak to this fellow. Whose grave 's this, sirrah?

First Clo. Mine, sir.

[*Sings*] O, a pit of clay for to be made
For such a guest is meet.

Ham. I think it be thine, indeed; for thou liest in 't.

First Clo. You lie out on 't, sir, and therefore it is not yours: for my part, I do not lie in 't, and yet it is mine.

Ham. Thou dost lie in 't, to be in 't and say it is thine: 't is for the dead, not for the quick; therefore thou liest.

First Clo. 'T is a quick lie, sir; 't will away again, from me to you.

Ham. What man dost thou dig it for?

First Clo. For no man, sir.

Ham. What woman, then?

First Clo. For none, neither.

Ham. Who is to be buried in 't?

First Clo. One that was a woman, sir; but, rest her soul, she 's dead.

Ham. How absolute the knave is! We must speak by the card, or equivocation will undo us. By the Lord, Horatio, these three years I have taken note of it; the age is grown so picked that the toe of the peasant comes so near the heel of the courtier, he galls his kibe. How long hast thou been a grave-maker?

First Clo. Of all the days i' the year, I came to 't that day that our last king Hamlet overcame Fortinbras.

Ham. How long is that since?

First Clo. Cannot you tell that? Every fool can tell that: it was the very day that young Hamlet was born; he that is mad, and sent into England.

Ham. Ay, marry, why was he sent into England?

First Clo. Why, because he was mad: he shall recover his wits there; or, if he do not, it 's no great matter there.

Ham. Why?

First Clo. 'T will not be seen in him there; there the men are as mad as he.

Ham. How came he mad?

First Clo. Very strangely, they say.

Ham. How strangely?

First Clo. Faith, e'en with losing his wits.

Ham. Upon what ground?

First Clo. Why, here in Denmark: I have been sexton here, man and boy, thirty years.

Ham. How long will a man lie i' the earth ere he rot?

First Clo. I' faith, if he be not rotten before he die — as we have many pocky corses now-a-days, that will scarce hold the laying in — he will last you some eight year or nine year: a tanner will last you nine year.

Ham. Why he more than another?

First Clo. Why, sir, his hide is so tanned with his trade, that he will keep out water a great while; and your water is a sore decayer of your dead body. Here 's a skull now; this skull has lain in the earth three and twenty years.

Ham. Whose was it?

First Clo. A whoreson mad fellow's it was: whose do you think it was?

Ham. Nay, I know not.

First Clo. A pestilence on him for a mad rogue: a' poured a flagon of Rhenish on my head once. This same skull, sir, was Yorick's skull, the king's jester.

Ham. This?

First Clo. E'en that.

Ham. Let me see. [*Takes the skull.*] Alas, poor Yorick! I knew him, Horatio: a fellow of infinite jest, of most excellent fancy: he hath borne me on his back a thousand times; and now, how abhorred in my imagination it is! My gorge rises at it. Here hung those lips that I have kissed I know not how oft. Where be your gibes now, your gambols, your songs, your flashes of merriment, that were wont to set the table on a roar? Not

Alas, poor Yorick!

— Act V. Scene 1

one now, to mock your own grinning, — quite chap-fallen? Now get you to my lady's chamber, and tell her, let her paint an inch thick, to this favor she must come; make her laugh at that. Prithee, Horatio, tell me one thing.

Hor. What 's that, my lord?

Ham. Dost thou think Alexander looked o' this fashion i' the earth?

Hor. E'en so.

Ham. And smelt so? pah! [*Puts down the skull.*

Hor. E'en so, my lord.

Ham. To what base uses we may return, Horatio! Why may not imagination trace the noble dust of Alexander, till he find it stopping a bung-hole?

Hor. 'T were to consider too curiously, to consider so.

Ham. No, faith, not a jot; but to follow him thither with modesty enough, and likelihood to lead it: as thus: Alexander died, Alexander was buried, Alexander returneth into dust; the dust is earth; of earth we make loam; and why of that loam, whereto he was converted, might they not stop a beer-barrel?

Imperious Cæsar, dead and turned to clay,
Might stop a hole to keep the wind away:
O, that that earth, which kept the world in awe,
Should patch a wall to expel the winter's flaw!

But soft; but soft: aside: here comes the king.

Enter Priests, *&c. in procession*; *the Corpse of* Ophelia, Laertes *and* Mourners *following*; King, Queen, *their trains, &c.*

The queen, the courtiers: who is this they follow?
And with such maimed rites? This doth betoken

The corse they follow did with desperate hand
Fordo its own life: 't was of some estate.
Couch we awhile, and mark.
[*Retiring with Horatio.*

Laer. What ceremony else?

Ham. That is Laertes,
A very noble youth: mark.

Laer. What ceremony else?

First Priest. Her obsequies have been as far enlarged
As we have warranties: her death was doubtful;
And, but that great command o'ersways the order,
She should in ground unsanctified have lodged
Till the last trumpet; for charitable prayers,
Shards, flints and pebbles should be thrown on her:
Yet here she is allowed her virgin crants,
Her maiden strewments and the bringing home
Of bell and burial.

Laer. Must there no more be done?

First Priest. No more be done:
We should profane the service of the dead
To sing a requiem and such rest to her
As to peace-parted souls.

Laer. Lay her i' the earth:
And from her fair and unpolluted flesh
May violets spring! I tell thee, churlish priest,
A ministering angel shall my sister be,
When thou liest howling.

Ham. What, the fair Ophelia!

Queen. Sweets to the sweet: farewell!
[*Scattering flowers.*
I hoped thou shouldst have been my Hamlet's wife;

I thought thy bride-bed to have decked, sweet maid,
And not have strewed thy grave.
Laer. O, treble woe
Fall ten times treble on that cursed head,
Whose wicked deed thy most ingenious sense
Deprived thee of! Hold off the earth awhile,
Till I have caught her once more in mine arms:
[*Leaps into the grave.*
Now pile your dust upon the quick and dead,
Till of this flat a mountain you have made,
To o'ertop old Pelion, or the skyish head
Of blue Olympus.
Ham. [*Advancing*] What is he whose grief
Bears such an emphasis, — whose phrase of sorrow
Conjures the wandering stars, and makes them stand
Like wonder-wounded hearers? This is I,
Hamlet the Dane. [*Leaps into the grave.*
Laer. The devil take thy soul!
[*Grappling with him.*
Ham. Thou pray'st not well.
I prithee, take thy fingers from my throat;
For, though I am not splenitive and rash,
Yet have I something in me dangerous,
Which let thy wiseness fear; hold off thy hand.
King. Pluck them asunder.
Queen. Hamlet, Hamlet!
All. Gentlemen, —
Hor. Good my lord, be quiet.
[*The Attendants part them, and they come out of the grave.*
Ham. Why, I will fight with him upon this theme

Until my eyelids will no longer wag.
Queen. O my son, what theme?
Ham. I loved Ophelia: forty thousand brothers
Could not, with all their quantity of love,
Make up my sum. What wilt thou do for her?
King. O, he is mad, Laertes.
Queen. For love of God, forbear him.
Ham. 'Swounds, show me what thou 'lt do:
Woo 't weep, woo 't fight, woo 't fast, woo 't tear thyself?
Woo 't drink up eisel, — eat a crocodile?
I 'll do 't. Dost thou come here to whine, —
To outface me with leaping in her grave?
Be buried quick with her, and so will I:
And, if thou prate of mountains, let them throw
Millions of acres on us, till our ground,
Singeing his pate against the burning zone,
Make Ossa like a wart! Nay, an thou 'lt mouth,
I 'll rant as well as thou.
Queen. This is mere madness:
And thus awhile the fit will work on him;
Anon, as patient as the female dove,
When that her golden couplets are disclosed,
His silence will sit drooping.
Ham. Hear you, sir;
What is the reason that you use me thus?
I loved you ever: but it is no matter;
Let Hercules himself do what he may,
The cat will mew and dog will have his day. [*Exit.*
King. I pray you, good Horatio, wait upon him.
[*Exit Horatio.*

[*To Laertes*] Strengthen your patience in our last night's speech;
We 'll put the matter to the present push.
Good Gertrude, set some watch over your son.
This grave shall have a living monument:
An hour of quiet shortly shall we see;
Till then, in patience our proceeding be. [*Exeunt.*

Scene II. *A hall in the castle.*

Enter Hamlet *and* Horatio.

Ham. So much for this, sir: now shall you see the other;
You do remember all the circumstance?
Hor. Remember it, my lord!
Ham. Sir, in my heart there was a kind of fighting,
That would not let me sleep: methought I lay
Worse than the mutines in the bilboes. Rashly, —
And praised be rashness for it, let us know,
Our indiscretion sometimes serves us well,
When our deep plots do pall: and that should teach us
There 's a divinity that shapes our ends,
Rough-hew them how we will, —
Hor. That is most certain.
Ham. Up from my cabin,
My sea-gown scarfed about me, in the dark
Groped I to find out them; had my desire,
Fingered their packet, and in fine withdrew
To mine own room again; making so bold,
My fears forgetting manners, to unseal
Their grand commission; where I found, Horatio, —

O royal knavery! — an exact command,
Larded with many several sorts of reasons
Importing Denmark's health and England's too,
With, ho! such bugs and goblins in my life,
That, on the supervise, no leisure bated,
No, not to stay the grinding of the axe,
My head should be struck off.

Hor. Is 't possible?

Ham. Here 's the commission: read it at more leisure.
But wilt thou hear me how I did proceed?

Hor. I beseech you.

Ham. Being thus be-netted round with villanies, —
Ere I could make a prologue to my brains,
They had begun the play — I sat me down,
Devised a new commission, wrote it fair:
I once did hold it, as our statists do,
A baseness to write fair and labored much
How to forget that learning, but, sir, now
It did me yeoman's service: wilt thou know
The effect of what I wrote?

Hor. Ay, good my lord.

Ham. An earnest conjuration from the king,
As England was his faithful tributary,
As love between them like the palm might flourish,
As peace should still her wheaten garland wear
And stand a comma 'tween their amities,
And many such-like 'As'es of great charge,
That, on the view and knowing of these contents,
Without debatement further, more or less,
He should the bearers put to sudden death,

Not shriving time allowed.

Hor. How was this sealed?

Ham. Why, even in that was heaven ordinant.
I had my father's signet in my purse,
Which was the model of that Danish seal;
Folded the writ up in form of the other,
Subscribed it, gave 't the impression, placed it safely,
The changeling never known. Now, the next day
Was our sea-fight; and what to this was sequent
Thou know'st already.

Hor. So Guildenstern and Rosencrantz go to 't.

Ham. Why, man, they did make love to this employment;
They are not near my conscience; their defeat
Does by their own insinuation grow:
'T is dangerous when the baser nature comes
Between the pass and fell incensed points
Of mighty opposites.

Hor. Why, what a king is this!

Ham. Does it not, think'st thee, stand me now upon —
He that hath killed my king and wiv'd my mother,
Popped in between the election and my hopes,
Thrown out his angle for my proper life,
And with such cozenage — is 't not perfect conscience,
To quit him with this arm; and is 't not to be damned,
To let this canker of our nature come
In further evil?

Hor. It must be shortly known to him from England
What is the issue of the business there.

Ham. It will be short: the interim is mine;

And a man's life 's no more than to say 'One.'
But I am very sorry, good Horatio,
That to Laertes I forgot myself;
For, by the image of my cause, I see
The portraiture of his: I 'll court his favors:
But, sure, the bravery of his grief did put me
Into a towering passion.

Hor. Peace! Who comes here?

Enter Osric.

Osr. Your lordship is right welcome back to Denmark.

Ham. I humbly thank you, sir. [*Aside to Horatio.*] Dost know this water-fly?

Hor. [*Aside to Hamlet.*] No, my good lord.

Ham. [*Aside to Horatio.*] Thy state is the more gracious; for 't is a vice to know him. He hath much land, and fertile: let a beast be lord of beasts, and his crib shall stand at the king's mess: 't is a chough; but, as I say, spacious in the possession of dirt.

Osr. Sweet lord, if your lordship were at leisure, I should impart a thing to you from his majesty.

Ham. I will receive it, sir, with all diligence of spirit. Put your bonnet to his right use; 't is for the head.

Osr. I thank your lordship, it is very hot.

Ham. No, believe me, 't is very cold; the wind is northerly.

Osr. It is indifferent cold, my lord, indeed.

Ham. But yet methinks it is very sultry and hot for my complexion.

Osr. Exceedingly, my lord; it is very sultry, — as

't were, — I cannot tell how. But, my lord, his majesty bade me signify to you that he has laid a great wager on your head: sir, this is the matter, —

Ham. I beseech you, remember — 105

[*Hamlet moves him to put on his hat.*

Osr. Nay, good my lord; for mine ease, in good faith. Sir, here is newly come to court Laertes; believe me, an absolute gentleman, full of most excellent differences, of very soft society and great showing: indeed, to speak feelingly of him, he is the card or calendar of gentry, for you shall find in him the continent of what part a gentleman would see. 112

Ham. Sir, his definement suffers no perdition in you; though, I know, to divide him inventorially would dizzy the arithmetic of memory, and yet but yaw neither, in respect of his quick sail. But, in the verity of extolment, I take him to be a soul of great article; and his infusion of such dearth and rareness, as, to make true diction of him, his semblable is his mirror; and who else would trace him, his umbrage, nothing more. 120

Osr. Your lordship speaks most infallibly of him.

Ham. The concernancy, sir? Why do we wrap the gentleman in our more rawer breath?

Osr. Sir?

Hor. Is 't not possible to understand in another tongue? You will do 't, sir, really. 126

Ham. What imports the nomination of this gentleman?

Osr. Of Laertes?

Hor. His purse is empty already; all 's golden words are spent. 131

Ham. Of him, sir.

Osr. I know you are not ignorant —

Ham. I would you did, sir; yet, in faith, if you did, it would not much approve me. Well, sir?

Osr. You are not ignorant of what excellence Laertes is —

Ham. I dare not confess that, lest I should compare with him in excellence; but, to know a man well, were to know himself.

Osr. I mean, sir, for his weapon; but in the imputation laid on him by them, in his meed he 's unfel lowed.

Ham. What 's his weapon?

Osr. Rapier and dagger.

Ham. That 's two of his weapons: but, well.

Osr. The king, sir, hath wagered with him six Barbary horses: against the which he has imponed, as I take it, six French rapiers and poniards, with their assigns, as girdle, hangers, and so: three of the carriages, in faith, are very dear to fancy, very responsive to the hilts, most delicate carriages, and of very liberal conceit.

Ham. What call you the carriages?

Hor. I knew you must be edified by the margent ere you had done.

Osr. The carriages, sir, are the hangers.

Ham. The phrase would be more german to the matter, if we could carry cannon by our sides: I would it might be hangers till then. But, on: six Barbary horses against six French swords, their assigns, and three liberal-conceited carriages; that 's the French bet against the Danish. Why is this ' imponed,' as you call it?

Osr. The king, sir, hath laid, that in a dozen passes between yourself and him, he shall not exceed you three hits: he hath laid on twelve for nine; and it would come to immediate trial, if your lordship would vouchsafe the answer. 167

Ham. How if I answer 'no'?

Osr. I mean, my lord, the opposition of your person in trial. 170

Ham. Sir, I will walk here in the hall: if it please his majesty, 't is the breathing time of day with me; let the foils be brought, the gentleman willing, and the king hold his purpose, I will win for him an I can; if not, I will gain nothing but my shame and the odd hits. 175

Osr. Shall I re-deliver you e'en so?

Ham. To this effect, sir; after what flourish your nature will.

Osr. I commend my duty to your lordship. 179

Ham. Yours, yours. [*Exit Osric.*] He does well to commend it himself; there are no tongues else for 's turn.

Hor. This lapwing runs away with the shell on his head.

Ham. He did comply with his dug, before he sucked it. Thus has he — and many more of the same breed that I know the drossy age dotes on — only got the tune of the time and the outward habit of encounter; a kind of yesty collection, which carries them through and through the most fond and winnowed opinions; and do but blow them to their trial, the bubbles are out. 189

Enter a Lord.

Lord. My lord, his majesty commended him to you by young Osric, who brings back to him, that you attend

him in the hall: he sends to know if your pleasure hold to play with Laertes, or that you will take longer time.

Ham. I am constant to my purposes; they follow the king's pleasure: if his fitness speaks, mine is ready; now or whensoever, provided I be so able as now. 196

Lord. The king and queen and all are coming down.

Ham. In happy time.

Lord. The Queen desires you to use some gentle entertainment to Laertes before you fall to play. 200

Ham. She well instructs me. [*Exit Lord.*

Hor. You will lose this wager, my lord.

Ham. I do not think so: since he went into France, I have been in continual practice; I shall win at the odds. But thou wouldst not think how ill all 's here about my heart: but it is no matter. 206

Hor. Nay, good my lord, —

Ham. It is but foolery; but it is such a kind of gain-giving as would perhaps trouble a woman.

Hor. If your mind dislike any thing, obey it: I will forestall their repair hither, and say you are not fit. 211

Ham. Not a whit, we defy augury: there 's a special providence in the fall of a sparrow. If it be now, 't is not to come; if it be not to come, it will be now; if it be not now, yet it will come: the readiness is all: since no man has aught of what he leaves, what is 't to leave betimes? 217

Enter KING, QUEEN, LAERTES, LORDS, OSRIC *and* Attendants *with foils, &c.*

King. Come, Hamlet, come, and take this hand from me.
[*The King puts Laertes' hand into Hamlet's.*

Ham. Give me your pardon, sir: I 've done you wrong;
But pardon 't, as you are a gentleman.
This presence knows,
And you must needs have heard, how I am punished
With sore distraction. What I have done,
That might your nature, honor and exception
Roughly awake, I here proclaim was madness.
Was 't Hamlet wronged Laertes? Never Hamlet:
If Hamlet from himself be ta'en away,
And when he 's not himself does wrong Laertes,
Then Hamlet does it not, Hamlet denies it.
Who does it, then? His madness: if 't be so,
Hamlet is of the faction that is wronged;
His madness is poor Hamlet's enemy.
Sir, in this audience,
Let my disclaiming from a purposed evil
Free me so far in your most generous thoughts,
That I have shot mine arrow o'er the house,
And hurt my brother.

Laer. I am satisfied in nature,
Whose motive, in this case, should stir me most
To my revenge: but in my terms of honor
I stand aloof; and will no reconcilement,
Till by some elder masters of known honor,
I have a voice and precedent of peace,
To keep my name ungored. But till that time,
I do receive your offered love like love,
And will not wrong it.

Ham. I embrace it freely;
And will this brother's wager frankly play.

Give us the foils. Come on.

Laer. Come, one for me.

Ham. I 'll be your foil, Laertes: in mine ignorance
Your skill shall, like a star i' the darkest night,
Stick fiery off indeed.

Laer. You mock me, sir.

Ham. No, by this hand.

King. Give them the foils, young Osric. Cousin Hamlet,
You know the wager?

Ham. Very well, my lord;
Your grace hath laid the odds o' the weaker side.

King. I do not fear it; I have seen you both:
But since he is bettered, we have therefore odds.

Laer. This is too heavy, let me see another.

Ham. This likes me well. These foils have all a length? [*They prepare to play.*

Osr. Ay, my good lord.

King. Set me the stoups of wine upon that table.
If Hamlet give the first or second hit,
Or quit in answer of the third exchange,
Let all the battlements their ordnance fire;
The king shall drink to Hamlet's better breath;
And in the cup an union shall he throw,
Richer than that which four successive kings
In Denmark's crown have worn. Give me the cups;
And let the kettle to the trumpet speak,
The trumpet to the cannoneer without,
The cannons to the heavens, the heavens to earth,
'Now the king drinks to Hamlet.' Come, begin:
And you, the judges, bear a wary eye.

Come on, sir.

— Act V. Scene 2.

Ham. Come on, sir.
Laer. Come, my lord. [*They play.*
Ham. One.
Laer. No.
Ham. Judgment.
Osr. A hit, a very palpable hit.
Laer. Well; again.
King. Stay; give me drink. Hamlet, this pearl is thine;
Here 's to thy health.
[*Trumpets sound, and cannon shot off within.*
Give him the cup.
Ham. I 'll play this bout first; set it by awhile.
Come. [*They play.*] Another hit; what say you?
Laer. A touch, a touch, I do confess.
King. Our son shall win.
Queen. He 's fat, and scant of breath.
Here, Hamlet, take my napkin, rub thy brows:
The queen carouses to thy fortune, Hamlet.
Ham. Good madam!
King. Gertrude, do not drink.
Queen. I will, my lord; I pray you, pardon me.
King. [*Aside*] It is the poisoned cup; it is too late.
Ham. I dare not drink yet, madam; by and by.
Queen. Come, let me wipe thy face.
Laer. My lord, I 'll hit him now.
King. I do not think 't.
Laer. [*Aside*] And yet 't is almost 'gainst my conscience.
Ham. Come, for the third, Laertes: you but dally;
I pray you, pass with your best violence;

I am afeard you make a wanton of me.

Laer. Say you so? Come on. [*They play.*

Osr. Nothing, neither way.

Laer. Have at you now!

[*Laertes wounds Hamlet; then, in scuffling, they change rapiers, and Hamlet wounds Laertes.*

King. Part them; they are incensed.

Ham. Nay, come, again. [*The Queen falls.*

Osr. Look to the queen there, ho!

Hor. They bleed on both sides. How is it, my lord?

Osr. How is 't, Laertes?

Laer. Why, as a woodcock to mine own springe, Osric;
I am justly killed with mine own treachery.

Ham. How does the queen?

King. She swounds to see them bleed.

Queen. No, no, the drink, the drink, — O my dear Hamlet, —
The drink, the drink! I am poisoned. [*Dies.*

Ham. O villany! Ho! let the door be locked:
Treachery! Seek it out.

Laer. It is here, Hamlet: Hamlet, thou art slain;
No medicine in the world can do thee good;
In thee there is not half an hour of life;
The treacherous instrument is in thy hand,
Unbated and envenomed: the foul practice
Hath turned itself on me; lo, here I lie,
Never to rise again: thy mother's poisoned:
I can no more: the king, the king 's to blame.

Ham. The point! — envenomed too!
Then, venom, to thy work. [*Stabs the King.*

All. Treason! treason!
King. O, yet defend me, friends; I am but hurt.
Ham. Here, thou licentious, murderous, damned Dane,
Drink off this potion. Is thy union here?
Follow my mother. [*King dies.*
Laer. He is justly served;
It is a poison tempered by himself.
Exchange forgiveness with me, noble Hamlet:
Mine and my father's death come not upon thee,
Nor thine on me! [*Dies.*
Ham. Heaven make thee free of it! I follow thee.
I am dead, Horatio. Wretched queen, adieu!
You that look pale and tremble at this chance,
That are but mutes or audience to this act,
Had I but time — as this fell sergeant, death,
Is strict in his arrest — O, I could tell you —
But let it be. Horatio, I am dead;
Thou livest; report me and my cause aright
To the unsatisfied.
Hor. Never believe it:
I am more an antique Roman than a Dane:
Here 's yet some liquor left.
Ham. As thou 'rt a man,
Give me the cup: let go; by heaven, I 'll have 't.
O good Horatio, what a wounded name,
Things standing thus unknown, shall live behind me!
If thou didst ever hold me in thy heart,
Absent thee from felicity awhile,
And in this harsh world draw thy breath in pain,
To tell my story. [*March afar off, and shot within.*
What warlike noise is this?

Osr. Young Fortinbras, with conquest come from Poland,
To the ambassadors of England gives
This warlike volley.
Ham. O, I die, Horatio;
The potent poison quite o'er-crows my spirit:
I cannot live to hear the news from England;
But I do prophesy the election lights
On Fortinbras: he has my dying voice;
So tell him, with the occurrents, more and less,
Which have solicited. The rest is silence. [*Dies.*
Hor. Now cracks a noble heart. Good night, sweet prince;
And flights of angels sing thee to thy rest!
Why does the drum come hither? [*March within.*

Enter FORTINBRAS, *the* English Ambassadors, *and others.*

Fort. Where is this sight?
Hor. What is it ye would see?
If aught of woe or wonder, cease your search.
Fort. This quarry cries on havoc. O proud death,
What feast is toward in thine eternal cell,
That thou so many princes at a shot
So bloodily hast struck?
First Amb. The sight is dismal;
And our affairs from England come too late:
The ears are senseless that should give us hearing
To tell him his commandment is fulfilled,
That Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are dead:
Where should we have our thanks?
Hor. Not from his mouth,

Had it the ability of life to thank you:
He never gave commandment for their death.
But since, so jump upon this bloody question,
You from the Polack wars, and you from England,
Are here arrived, give order that these bodies
High on a stage be placed to the view;
And let me speak to the yet unknowing world
How these things came about: so shall you hear
Of carnal, bloody, and unnatural acts,
Of accidental judgments, casual slaughters,
Of deaths put on by cunning and forced cause,
And, in this upshot, purposes mistook
Fallen on the inventors' heads: all this can I
Truly deliver.

Fort. Let us haste to hear it,
And call the noblest to the audience.
For me, with sorrow I embrace my fortune:
I have some rights of memory in this kingdom,
Which now to claim my vantage doth invite me.

Hor. Of that I shall have also cause to speak,
And from his mouth whose voice will draw on more:
But let this same be presently performed,
Even while men's minds are wild; lest more mischance,
On plots and errors, happen.

Fort. Let four captains
Bear Hamlet, like a soldier, to the stage;
For he was likely, had he been put on,
To have proved most royally: and, for his passage,
The soldiers' music and the rites of war
Speak loudly for him.
Take up the bodies: such a sight as this

Becomes the field, but here shows much amiss. 395
Go, bid the soldiers shoot.

[*A dead march. Exeunt, bearing off the dead bodies; after which a peal of ordnance is shot off.*

A LIST OF THE PERSONS OF THE DRAMA, WITH THE SCENES IN WHICH THEY APPEAR

CLAUDIUS	I 2, II 2, III 1 2 3, IV 1 3 5 7, V 1 2.
HAMLET	I 2 4 5, II 2, III 1 2 3 4, IV 2 3 4, V 1 2.
POLONIUS	I 2 3, II 1 2, III 1 2 3 4.
HORATIO	I 1 2 4 5, III 2, IV 5 6, V 1 2.
LAERTES	I 2 3, IV 5 7, V 1 2.
VOLTIMAND	I 2, II 2.
CORNELIUS	I 2, II 2.
ROSENCRANTZ	II 2, III 1 2 3, IV 1 2 3 4.
GUILDENSTERN	II 2, III 1 2 3, IV 1 2 3 4.
OSRIC	V 2.
A Gentleman	IV 5.
A Priest	V 1.
MARCELLUS	I 1 2 4 5.
BERNARDO	I 1 2.
FRANCISCO	I 1.
REYNALDO	II 1.
Players	II 2, III 2.
Two Clowns	V 1.
FORTINBRAS	IV 4, V 2.
A Captain	IV 4.
English Ambassadors	V 2.
GERTRUDE	I 2, II 2, III 1 2 4, IV 1 5 7, V 1 2.
OPHELIA	I 3, II 1, III 1 2, IV 5.
Ghost	I 1 4 5, III 4.

APPENDIX

ORIGIN AND PUBLICATION OF "HAMLET"

Shakespeare produced his plays and poems during a period of twenty years, which is almost equally divided by the close of the sixteenth century. Before 1600 most of the comedies had been written, together with all the historical plays except "Henry VIII." Of the tragedies only two had appeared — "Romeo and Juliet" and "Titus Andronicus." After 1600 came the series of great tragedies — "Julius Cæsar," "Hamlet," "Othello," "King Lear," "Macbeth," and "Antony and Cleopatra." The year mentioned marked a change in the growth of his genius, a time when he was no longer satisfied to express his thoughts and ideas about life in comedies and historical plays and turned to something with deeper dramatic significance.

"Hamlet" marks a change in Shakespeare's methods.

The first plays in which the change is seen — "Julius Cæsar" and "Hamlet" — show some interesting resemblances. A study of the language reveals certain points of similarity, and the chief characters have not a little in common. Both plays deal with the idealist thrust into the world of action. Brutus as well as Hamlet is unfitted for the work he is called upon to do; both, in the end, bungle it badly

The idealist in the world of action.

— Hamlet through delay and uncertainty, Brutus from errors of judgment. The peculiar difficulties which would naturally beset men of this type — their reaction to the circumstances in which they found themselves — presented a dramatic problem which had a strong attraction for Shakespeare at this period; Hamlet, indeed, may well be considered the finished picture of which Brutus was the first sketch. In "King Henry V," written only a year or so before "Julius Cæsar," he had set forth a strong and heroic man of action — a leader who could reanimate his drooping soldiers by a "little touch of Harry in the night"; the two later plays portray men, temperamentally unfitted for action, placed in positions where action is imperative. What will such men do in the circumstances? — that is the central theme. "Hamlet cannot act," says Professor Dowden, "because his moral energy is sapped by a kind . . . of despair about life, because his ideas are more to him than deeds. . . . Brutus does act, but he acts as an idealist and theorizer might, with no eye for the actual bearing of facts, and no sense of the true importance of persons . . . his public action is a series of practical mistakes." Brutus says:

> Between the acting of a dreadful thing
> And the first motion, all the interim is
> Like a phantasma, or a hideous dream,

and Hamlet:

> The time is out of joint: O, cursed spite
> That ever I was born to set it right!

The mental attitude expressed by such despairing utterances as these indicates a moral fiber that cannot hold out against "the wreckful siege of battering days." Very different is the spirit in which Henry V meets his problems:

> 'T is true we are in great danger;
> The greater, therefore, should our courage be. . .
> There is some soul of goodness in things evil,
> Would men observingly distil it out.

Much has been written upon the reasons for this change in Shakespeare's point of view — this turning to the darker truths of life.[1] Here, however, we can only call attention to the fact and proceed to discuss the matter of how "Hamlet" came into existence.

Originality of plot unimportant.

Young persons studying a Shakespearian play for the first time are often surprised, and sometimes even distressed, to learn that the stories of the dramatist's works were not original with him. Originality of plot seems to them the chief requisite of greatness; a worker in second-hand material falls under their scorn; they begin to wonder just why this borrower of other men's ideas has been rated so highly and so profoundly admired by their elders. This is not strange. Action, movement, complication of events, — all that goes to make up a plot, — is interesting and therefore important to boys and girls. They are naturally more concerned with what the hero *does*, than how he does it, or how he talks, or what he is like. Moreover, in our novel-reading, inventive age, — in our age

[1] See page 210.

of "movies" and of everything new and startling, — it is not surprising that false values are given to things just because they are original. It is difficult even for mature people to see that originality of plot in story or play is really the least important element in the final test of its worth. They must be reminded that any one with a little clever inventiveness can work out a complicated and entirely new series of events. Thousands of short stories and novels appear every year in our magazines with plots that are skillfully woven and often remarkably original. Beyond that they have nothing to recommend them, so that after a moment's curiosity to see "how they come out," they are completely neglected and soon forgotten. The fact that in plot and action they are "something new" and clever gives them no claim whatsoever to the enduring fame of literature.

It is therefore not a sign of weakness or of a shallow mind to find Shakespeare making use of material already at his disposal. On the contrary, it is evidence of wisdom and good judgment. He was above bothering his head with new plots to amuse his audiences. All his mind and skill and strength were needed for more essential things. Old plays, Italian novels, Plutarch's Lives, chronicles of English history, furnished him with incidents and characters with which to work. The best elements of these he skillfully chose, made over, and combined; but next to nothing did he himself invent. The force of his wonderful genius was spent in drawing character so clearly and so true to human nature that the men and women of his plays became distinct personalities

Shakespeare not a writer of original stories.

that have lived now for three hundred years in the hearts of the people. Falstaff, Portia, Shylock, Rosalind, Hamlet, Desdemona, Macbeth, Juliet, Lear, — these are as real as any who have lived in the annals of history. Then again, the language and the poetry of the plays, the sentiments, the wit, and above all the artistic blending of thought and character and action, are his and his alone. The sources of the stories which Shakespeare used no one ever reads. They are commonplace, flat, and unworthy of our interest. Yet these same stories remolded, polished, and filled with the inspiration of Shakespeare's genius, have become masterpieces of literature.

It is well that Shakespeare was not attracted to the inventing of elaborate and original plots, for he must have been busy enough as it was. In their demand for novelty in stage attractions audiences then required a new play, on an average of every sixteen or seventeen days. Intense rivalry existed between the various companies of actors. In their struggle for popularity, which meant their daily bread, playwrights turned off their work with astonishing rapidity. Thus in the twenty years of his London activity Shakespeare wrote, in whole or in part, about forty plays. "Driven by the necessity of speed on the one hand, and by anxiety to catch the popular fancy on the other, is it any wonder that he never stopped to devise a plot? What need was there that he should do so? The manager of the company had many an old play which, at one time or another, had been submitted to the test of public approval. . . . To such plays, if

Advantages of using old material for plays.

selected for revision, a certain amount of popularity was thus assured in advance; and as for the plot, — the barest skeleton sufficed for Shakespeare. He knew that he could remodel it into fair proportions and relume it with life. Of all that goes to make up one of his dramas, the plot in itself, in its mere outlines, is of less importance than any other element in it. Of course, in the nature of things, it is not to be supposed that after he had selected the old play to be rejuvenated he either adhered to it closely, or refused hints from other sources. Old ballads, books of travels, histories, the gossip of the day, — all were put under contribution. As Emerson says: 'Every master has found his materials collected, and power lay in his sympathy with his people, and in his love for the materials he wrought in.' " [1]

Origin of "Hamlet."

The story of Hamlet is an ancient legend of the North. It was first set forth in writing in the "Historia Danica" of Saxo Grammaticus (the "scholar"), a Danish historian of the twelfth century. His work was first printed at Paris, in 1514. Some years later (1570) the tale was included in the "Histoires Tragiques" of a French writer, Francis de Belleforest. Thence, it was translated into English as "The Hystorie of Hamblet." The "Hystorie," with one or two exceptions, closely follows the French version and it may be summarized here as indicating the form of the historical narrative in Shakespeare's time.

Horvendile, the father of Hamblet, was treacherously slain by his brother Fengon at a banquet. Fengon by false witnesses cleared his own name from disgrace and

[1] Dr. H. H. Furness: New Variorum Edition, "Merchant of Venice."

married Geruth, wife of the murdered man. Hamblet, seeing that Fengon planned to "send him the same way his father Horvendile was gone," feigned madness. Fengon set spies on him, one of whom concealed himself in a room where Hamblet was to meet his mother. The prince came in and, suspecting treachery, discovered the counselor behind the arras. He slew him and then cut the body in pieces and disposed of it. In the interview with his mother he made her see the evil she had done. Fengon after this caused Hamblet to be sent to England and dispatched with him two courtiers with written orders for his death at the hands of the English king. But Hamblet discovered the orders and changed them so that they commanded the execution of the courtiers, while he himself should receive the daughter of the king in marriage. Hamblet stayed in England for a year; then, having seen the courtiers executed and having been betrothed to the king's daughter, he returned to Denmark. There he found his funeral rites being held, but changed them into a great celebration of his return. He managed to make all his foes drunk and, as they lay helpless in the main hall, set fire to the palace. Then, while the castle was burning, he went to his uncle's room, woke him up and promptly chopped off his head. The people thereupon made him King of Denmark. Hamblet next went to England, but the King tried secretly to put him to death; whereupon he slew the King and "returned again into Denmark with two wives." Another uncle, named Wiglerus, then assailed him. He was betrayed by one of his wives, and slain. So runs the "Hystorie."

The "Hystorie of Hamblet."

This strange, wild tale seems to have attracted the attention of English playwrights, for there is evidence of a Hamlet play as early as 1589. It is a "revenge" play, and since it was attacked by a writer of the day, it must have been fairly successful. This writer complains of upstart play-makers who "run through every art and thrive by none," and says that if any one will take a translation of Seneca (a Latin dramatist much admired at the time) and "intreat him faire in a frostie morning, he will afford you whole *Hamlets*, I should say handfulls of tragical speaches." Another writer refers to the "ghost, which cried so miserably at the theatre, like an oyster-wife, *Hamlet revenge*." This early play was not by Shakespeare, but was acted by his company in 1594 — which brings us to the question of Shakespeare's "Hamlet."

Early Hamlet play.

As is the case with many of the plays, we find an early record of "Hamlet" in the Register of the Stationers Company. This famous old organization, incorporated in 1556, for nearly three hundred years regulated the publication of books in England. It was, indeed, the official method, during Queen Elizabeth's reign, of granting a license to a publisher. The record for July 26, 1602, among other notices of books "allowed to be printed," contains the following entry:

Shakespeare's "Hamlet."

James Robertes, Entered for his copie under the hands of Master *Pasfield* and master *Waterson* warden. A booke called "*The revenge of Hamlett Prince of Denmark*" *as yt was latlie acted by the Lord Chamberleyn his servantes.*

This means, simply: "The version of 'Hamlet' recently acted by Shakespeare's Company." Though "entered," it was never printed. The reason for its entry was that Roberts wanted to prevent any one else printing the play. In the following year, however, it actually was printed, with a title-page stating that it was written "by William Shake-speare" and had been acted at various times by "his Highnesse servantes in the citie of London" and at Oxford and Cambridge and elsewhere. It is the same play and the same company, which has now passed under the patronage of the King, James I. This is the earliest version of Shakespeare's "Hamlet" that has come down to us. But this first printed version contains many obvious faults — so many, indeed, that it is now considered to be a "pirated" edition, issued without any authority and based on a rough copy made in the theatre by a shorthand writer. It is known as the "First Quarto."[1] In those days, while a play was still popular on the stage the author tried to keep it out of print, fearing that its appearance in book form might hurt attendance at the theatre. But here was a case where an unauthorized edition had appeared, and one which (as we shall see presently) was calculated to give a false idea of the play. Some one, therefore — the manager of the company, or the printer James Roberts, or Shakespeare himself — was stirred up to issue another edition which should be a true rendering of the drama. In 1604, then, appeared the "Second Quarto." The title-page is emphatic:

[1] See page 201.

THE

TRAGICALL HISTORIE OF

HAMLET,

Prince of Denmarke.

By William Shakespeare.

New imprinted and enlarged to almost as much again as it was, according to the true and perfect Coppie.

AT LONDON,

Printed by I. R. for N. L. and are to be sold at his shoppe under Saint Dunstons Church in Fleetstreet, 1604.

This version is immensely superior to the edition of 1603 in sense and accuracy, and was evidently intended to drive the latter out of the market. Two other quartos appeared during Shakespeare's lifetime, and two more after his death — the last in 1637. All these are virtual reprints of the Second Quarto. The collected edition of the plays published in 1623 — the famous "First Folio"[1] — contains a "Hamlet" which differs in some respects from the Second Quarto; it is not so long and it has a few passages which are not found in the Quarto. The play in its present form — the "authorized text" — is based upon a combination of the Quarto and the Folio editions.

The matter may be briefly summed up. The company of players to which Shakespeare belonged possessed an old crude "Hamlet" of the "revenge" type, which they acted between 1589 and 1600. The company met

[1] See page 201.

with difficulties in London and was forced to "travel" (see II. 2 in the play), and Shakespeare used this old play for a rapidly written drama which was first acted in 1601. When the company returned to London, their play was pirated by an unscrupulous bookseller (probably by means of a shorthand writer in the theatre) and published as a quarto in 1603. The stupidity of the shorthand writer is shown by such crudities as "Rossencraft and Gilderstone" for "Rosencrantz and Guildenstern," and by the utter absurdity of renderings like this version of the opening lines of Hamlet's soliloquy (III. 1. 56 ff.):

Summary.

> To be or not to be, I there 's the point,
> To die, to sleepe, is that all? I all:
> No, to sleepe, to dreame, I mary there it goes,
> For in that dreame of death, when wee awake,
> And borne before an everlasting Judge;
> From whence no passenger ever returned,
> The undiscovered country, at whose sight
> The happy smile, and the accursed damn'd.

A correct and authorized edition was put forth in 1604 — the Second Quarto. But, as frequently happens on the stage during a long "run," the play needed cutting and changing as time went on. Some of the speeches proved too long; now and then new passages were added. These changes were made in the acting-copy, and when Shakespeare's friends published the great Folio of 1623 they used the amended stage version as the basis of their text. Scholars have made a correlation of the two texts and from this correlation has come our present "Hamlet."

It will readily be understood that such revision and alteration gave rise to puzzling complications in the text; there are several obscure passages, and some which have never been satisfactorily cleared up. These obscurities, however, present little real difficulty. The story itself is interesting; the characters stand vividly before us, while the struggle between Hamlet's wish to do what he knows ought to be done and his inability to translate the wish into action, forms a study which grows more enthralling as we read on into the play. "The amount of ingenious discussion on certain difficult places in 'Hamlet' tends to give a wrong impression of the play. Careless scribes, careless typesetters, Elizabethan actors carelessly inserting changes in the text, have all left their marks, but nevertheless in almost every instance so clear is the thought, so compelling the emotion of the whole passage that he who is able to respond to the feeling may pass swiftly on, nor miss it because of those moments when the exact meaning is dubious. Read again and again, each time 'Hamlet' will reveal new beauties in its combined accuracy and imaginativeness of phrase, its profundity and fidelity of characterization, and its subtle surmounting of technical dramaturgic difficulties. It is the masterpiece of Shakespeare's masterpieces."[1]

[1] From the Introduction to *Shakespeare's Hamlet*, edited by George P. Baker (Tudor Edition). Used by permission of The Macmillan Company, Publishers.

THE RIGHT APPROACH TO "HAMLET"

More has been written about "Hamlet," probably, than about any other of Shakespeare's plays. Especially during the last hundred years has this been the case. In England, in France, in Germany — more particularly in Germany — scholars have toiled to interpret the meaning of the play. Some of their suggestions and theories are wise; some are not; a few are amazing. They differ not only about the meaning, but about the actual events, about what actually occurred. Where was Hamlet when the murder of his father took place? Was he mad, or only pretending? Was he really in love with Ophelia? How much did his mother know? Is the play an allegory of life, filled with Shakespeare's theories of good and evil, wherein the very names of the characters have a mysterious significance? The net result of all this is that many people have come to consider "Hamlet" a very difficult play, full of perplexing problems.

"Hamlet" and the critics.

But if we remember a few elementary facts, we shall find that there ought to be no real difficulty for the person of average intelligence. Let us forget, for the moment, all about the scholars and the critics, and think of one or two simple things. In the first place, "Hamlet" was written by a man who was an actor and who had been associated with actors all his life. In the second place, it was written as a play, not as a philosophical problem; a play to be acted on a stage before an audience. Again, it was intended not

Not a difficult play.

for an audience of scholars and critics, but for the ordinary man. Lastly, it was understood and enjoyed by the ordinary man before any of the modern critical opinion had come into existence. To the playgoers of Shakespeare's time and later there was nothing mysterious about "Hamlet." What held these audiences was the interest of the story, the masterly character-drawing, the effective dramatic situations, the noble verse.

The best way to understand the play is, of course, to see it acted; the next best way is to read it aloud with a group of friends. A certain "background knowledge" of Shakespeare and his times is necessary, to be sure; but if the play be read *as a play*, with due regard to what the author aimed at in his characters and situations, most, if not all, of the supposed difficulties will disappear.

The development of this drama, which has fascinated so many playgoers, is, after all, neither obscure nor involved. A young prince, manly, popular, well educated, suddenly loses his father under circumstances that are peculiarly painful to him. He is summoned home from college, finds that his uncle is in possession of the kingdom which he himself is heir to, and that the marriage of his mother has "followed hard upon." His deep love for his father causes him the keenest suffering. He cannot reconcile himself to the new state of affairs and while he is still burdened with this load of grief there appears to him the spirit of his father with a tale of surpassing horror. What will he do? Denounce the murderer? But there is no evidence in support of so incredible an accusation — he has but the word of a ghost. Can he slay the King?

The story.

But the King is married to his mother and is, moreover, his father's brother. Would he look about him for help? There is no one to turn to. His friends fail him in time of need: Ophelia, the girl he loves, proves weak and untrustworthy; his two fellow-students turn out to be spies of the King; Polonius is nothing but a "tedious old fool." Horatio, indeed, remains — but how can Horatio help him?

He is alone; but he has no real privacy. He is watched almost from the first moment of the play. Under the constant sense of espionage, he feigns madness. This is a disguise under which he finds relief for his distempered thoughts and an opportunity to work out some plan.

What will be done in these peculiarly difficult circumstances? This is the problem that interested Shakespeare, and that interests us. Hamlet finds out the truth eventually by means of the Players. What next? He has a chance to slay the King — shall he seize it? Would a man of his training and antecedents stab treacherously, from behind? Shakespeare knew, and we know, that the thing was impossible. So, with his problem still unsolved, he is shipped off to England; he escapes and comes back.

But now he has made up his mind — "the interim is mine." What was the plan of revenge we are not permitted to see, however, for the treachery of the King brings about his death within a very short period after his return, before he has time to act. Would he eventually have accomplished his vengeance? This we can never know — "the rest is silence."

Summarizing thus, we find nothing that lies outside the range of our own thoughts about life. The play is not intended to teach a lesson in mental conditions; it is not intended to teach any lesson; it is a piece of life set before us on the stage. If we realize this, and realize, too, how Shakespeare has breathed into his work the very breath of life, our minds will be freed from the weight of problems and theories and we shall not find anything that we fail to understand.

The play a section of life.

THE METER OF "HAMLET"

In writing his plays Shakespeare used the poetical form known as "blank verse." The reason why he wrote in poetry was that it had become established as the proper medium for dramatic work during the growth of the drama in the past few centuries. The Mysteries and Miracle Plays, and the Moralities,[1] were all written in verse — very crude for the most part, but showing the wish and effort to differentiate the language of the stage from the language of everyday life. As time went on and the taste of the public began slightly to improve, there came to be some endeavor to create a higher type of poetry for dramatic work. Thus, about the middle of the sixteenth century (1562) we find a play written in English blank verse. This play was called "Gorboduc" and, though stilted and artificial, and uninteresting from our point of view, it possesses for the student of literature two features of great value: it marks the beginning of true English tragedy, and it shows the possibilities of a verse-form much more dignified than that which had so long been used in the older stage performances.

This verse-form was employed by Christopher Marlowe when he wrote his great tragedies, "Tamburlaine," "Dr. Faustus," and "The Jew of Malta." He makes his reason perfectly clear:

> From jigging veins of rhyming mother wits,
> And such conceits as clownage keeps in pay;
> We 'll lead you to the stately tents of war. . . .

[1] See pages 230–231.

The "rhyming mother wits" and the jests of "clownage" refer, of course, to the rough poetry and the rougher horse-play of the Mysteries and Moralities. Marlowe plainly says that his verse will aim at greater things than have been accomplished in the past. As a matter of fact he did what he expected to do. His poetry was deeply admired by his contemporaries, and twenty-five years after the appearance of the tame and pedestrian blank verse of "Gorboduc," "Marlowe's mighty line" brought about a revolution in the writing of the English drama. While not actually originating the form, he made it an entirely new thing and conferred upon it new power and vitality. "Shakespeare absorbed it, and gave it out again with its familiar cadences in 'Romeo and Juliet,' and later with many broad and lovely modifications. It has become the life-blood of our literature; Marlowe's place is at the heart of English poetry, and his pulses still thrill in our verse."

The blank verse line used by Shakespeare is known as "iambic pentameter" — which means that it is made up of five "iambic" feet, or units, each foot consisting of two syllables with the accent on the second. Thus, we should indicate the meter of "Hamlet" as follows:

If thou | didst e|ver hold | me in | thy heart,|

Absent | thee from | felic|ity | awhile,|

And in | this harsh | world draw | thy breath | in pain |

(V. 2. 339–42)

Of course, if this were the only form of the line it would soon grow very monotonous — as, indeed, it did become

when first introduced. There must be many variations, many interchanges of the feet and shiftings of the accent, if the line is to serve its purpose to the full. This is just what happens in Shakespeare's plays. He begins with a restricted use of the meter, but as time goes on he uses it with more freedom and therefore with greater effect, until at last it becomes in his hands a perfect instrument for the expression of what he has to say. His use of blank verse, however, is too large a subject for discussion here: all that can be done is briefly to indicate a few of the variations in "Hamlet," which may serve to give some idea of Shakespeare's freedom and mastery.

The passage quoted above illustrates the typical Shakespearian line — five feet, each of two syllables; each foot having one accent, on the second syllable. Here are a few of the variations from this normal type:

1. Accent inversion. Sometimes the accent falls on the first syllable of the foot instead of on the second:

Costly | thy hab|it as | thy purse | can buy | (I. 3. 70)

But this | most foul | strange and | unnat |ural | (I. 5. 28)

This a|bove all | : to thine | own self | be true | (I. 3. 78)

2. Extra syllables. These may come either within the line or at the end:

Let it | be ten|able in | your si|lence still | (I. 2. 247)

Whether | 't is no|bler in | the mind | to suf|fer

The slings | and ar|rows of | outrag|eous for|tune

(III. 1. 57–8)

3. Omission of syllables. There are many instances in "Hamlet."

Your loves, | as mine | to you.| |Farewell.| (I. 2. 253)

The pause here is filled by a bow or a wave of the hand as the three soldiers leave Hamlet. Incomplete lines are also used, to denote strong emotion — the gap being filled by appropriate action or by a dramatic pause:

Ay, mar|ry is 't.| (I. 4. 13)

Saw?| Who?| (I. 2. 189)

I will | not speak | with her.| (IV. 5. 1)

Many other irregularities occur in Shakespeare's blank verse, but these are sufficient to indicate something of his method.

A word should be said here about the use of prose in "Hamlet." It comes quite frequently and always for very definite reasons. Such use of prose is a mark of Shakespeare's maturity; in his early plays it does not appear, or appears very seldom. But as he gains in experience he introduces prose to vary the monotony of the verse and, more particularly, as the fitting mode of expression for comic characters or persons in the lower walks of life. Note, in "Hamlet," how appropriately it is brought in. Hamlet talks prose with the Players (II. 2, III. 2), with the Clowns (V. 1), and with Osric (V. 2). He employs the same medium when he is acting the madman: observe especially the change from blank verse to prose when he begins to suspect Ophelia (III. 1). Prose is also used in the letters and in the speech of servants. Other examples

— outside of "Hamlet" — of prose employed for strong effects are to be seen in "Macbeth" (the Porter and Sleep-walking Scenes) and in "Julius Cæsar" (Casca's conversation in Act I and Brutus's speech in Act III). The prose passages are characterized by the same care as that which distinguishes the poetry, and are always employed for definite dramatic purposes.

Perhaps the most interesting thing (from our present point of view) about Shakespeare's blank verse is the fact that it lends itself so perfectly to the expression of what each character has to say. One realizes to the full, when listening to some great actor in any one of the great parts, how fittingly thought and expression are united. It is not always possible, however, thus to come in contact with the masters of interpretation; but we may still test for ourselves to some extent the degree of Shakespeare's mastery over his tools. Viewing the opening scene of "Hamlet" on the stage, one does not realize that the whole is composed in poetry. So carefully is the dialogue managed, with such understanding and such infinite pains, that the use of blank verse adds vividness and power to a situation of exceptional strength. Let us visualize the thing for ourselves. Night; a single sentry pacing his lonely rounds under the star-strewn sky; deadly silence and bitter cold. Perhaps, beneath the ramparts, the long wash of the northern sea. The sentry does not hear the approach of his relief, and it is the latter who speaks first:

Bernardo. Who's there?
Francisco. Nay, answer *me:* stand and unfold yourself.
Bern. Long live the king!

Fran. Bernardo?
Bern. He.
Fran. You come most carefully upon your hour.
Bern. 'T is now struck twelve: get thee to bed, Francisco.
Fran. For this relief much thanks: 't is bitter cold, And I am sick at heart.
Bern. Have you had quiet guard?
Fran. Not a mouse stirring.
Bern. Well, good night. . . .

Why was Francisco "sick at heart"? Why that rather anxious question of Bernardo's about "quiet guard"? They are expecting something. Note how the interest becomes intensified upon the entrance of Horatio and Marcellus. Read the scene through aloud, intelligently, making it your aim to emphasize the speeches as they ought to be emphasized: you will be amazed to find how the rhythm of the blank verse leads the reading voice towards the correct interpretation. Here is a case where Shakespeare has not only indicated by the broken lines a strain and intensity of feeling, but has made the poetical form heighten, in a way that prose could never do, the intensity and the strain. That is, really, the wonderful thing about all of Shakespeare's blank verse — it actually enforces the correct interpretation. Read over (aloud, once more) Hamlet's outburst of grief when he is left alone in the second scene of the first Act:

O, that this too too solid flesh would melt, . . .

and note how finely the movement of the verse brings out

the bewilderment and the hopeless sorrow of the speaker. Take the speech at the end of the second Act:

O, what a rogue and peasant slave am I!

Mark with what mastery the verse leads on the voice and the thought — through self-reproach and unreasoning fury to the deliberate planning at the close. Or, once more, consider the most famous of all the soliloquies:

To be, or not to be, that is the question. . . .

Is it not true that here one is compelled by the very structure and the strong forward march of the lines to read slowly and to ponder as one reads?

These considerations are not fanciful; their truth will soon grow manifest to any thoughtful student of the play. And what has been said is merely a statement of the fact (which becomes clearer the more we familiarize ourselves with his work) that Shakespeare was a master in the use of the medium which he chose to give his plays to the world.

STAGE HISTORY OF "HAMLET"

"Hamlet" on shipboard.

Some one has well said that the history of "Hamlet" is practically the history of the English-speaking stage. For three hundred years it has engaged the attention of actor and audience more than any other play of Shakespeare. It has been the test by which the greatest actors have proved their skill. Its wide popularity in Shakespeare's own time is best shown, perhaps, by the fact that in 1607 it was acted on board an English ship at sea. In September of that year Captain Keeling, of the *Dragon*, was sailing to the East Indies in company with the *Hector*, Captain Hawkins. On the 5th, and again on the 31st of that month, "Hamlet" was performed by the crew of the *Dragon*. Captain Keeling writes: "I invited Captain Hawkins to a fish dinner, and had Hamlet acted aboard me: wch. I permit to keep my people from unlawful games, or sleepe." One would give much for further details of this performance.

Famous actors.

The first actor to take the part of Hamlet was Richard Burbage, a friend of Shakespeare's and the leading player of his company. The fine tradition of his acting was carried on by Thomas Betterton after 1660. Betterton's acting is referred to by Samuel Pepys (by no means a kindly critic) in his "Diary" as "the best part, I believe, that ever man acted." Betterton is said to have introduced scenery into the play — for we must remember that the scenery of Shakespeare's day existed largely in the imagination of the audience. David Garrick, Dr. Johnson's friend, was the leading interpreter of

the part from 1734 to 1776. He made many alterations of his own in the text, chief of which was the omission of the Graveyard Scene. During the later years of the eighteenth century appeared the actor who, in the opinion of many, was the greatest of all Hamlets — John Philip Kemble. He restored the original text. Other great names in the part are Edmund Kean (1787–1833); William Charles Macready (1793–1873), a warm friend of Charles Dickens; Edwin Booth (1833–1893); Sir Henry Irving (1838–1905); and, in our own time, Sir Johnston Forbes-Robertson, whose interpretation, like that of Irving, aroused the strongest interest and enthusiasm in this country. Besides the great actors, there is a long roll of famous actresses who have taken the parts of Ophelia or the Queen. Best known of these is Mrs. Siddons, the sister of John Kemble.

One reason for the enduring popularity of the play is stated clearly enough in the words of a recent writer: "Forget the critics and it will seem to you that all of us, in our degree, must have thought and suffered much like Hamlet. We should not have spoken so well, without Shakespeare's help, but dumbly or with groans we must have pursued those trains of thought. We also might have looked at the bright sky, and contrasted it with the sudden joylessness of life. Hamlet does this in a passage of such splendour as only Shakespeare could have lent him. But our 'sky' and his 'canopy' are one. We also might have thought of suicide, as Hamlet did, and dimly groped into the question of a Hereafter. Hamlet's language is again beyond us, but his thoughts are not. Hamlet is not an abnormally constituted man acting in

an abnormal way. Hamlet is each one of us. He is abnormal only in his circumstances and in the scale on which he is drawn." [1]

It is just such considerations as these which have made the part of Hamlet the goal of all great players, from Burbage to Forbes-Robertson. In its truth to life, not less than in its beautiful language and masterly dramatic quality, the play remains both for those who act and those who look on the greatest of all Shakespearian dramas.

[1] G. L. Gordon.

COMMENTS ON THE CHARACTERS

Here are a few paragraphs from famous critics of Shakespeare. They are arranged chronologically. You will note that the character of Hamlet has been discussed from the Restoration down to the present time, and that there is much difference of opinion as to what Shakespeare meant him to be.

Hamlet

26 (May 1663). By water to the Royal Theatre; but that was so full they told us we could have no room. And so to the Duke's house; and there saw "Hamlet" done, giving us fresh reason never to think enough of Betterton.

31 (August 1668). To the Duke of York's playhouse, and saw "Hamlet," which we have not seen this year before, or more; and mightily pleased with it, but above all with Betterton, the best part, I believe, that ever man acted.

— Samuel Pepys, "Diary."

Our old dramatic poet, Shakespeare, may witness for our good ear and manly relish. . . . By the justness of his moral, the aptness of many of his descriptions, and the plain and natural turn of many of his characters, he pleases his audience, and often gains their ear, without a single bribe from luxury or vice.

That piece of his, the tragedy of Hamlet, which appears to have most affected English hearts, and has perhaps been oftenest acted of any which have come upon our stage, is almost one continued moral; a series of deep

reflections, drawn from one mouth, upon the subject of one single accident and calamity, naturally fitted to move horror and compassion.

— Antony, Earl of Shaftesbury, "Advice to an Author," 1710.

Now I am come to mention Hamlet's madness, I must speak my opinion of our poet's conduct in this particular. To conform to the groundwork of his plot, Shakespeare makes the young prince feign himself mad. I cannot but think this to be injudicious; for, so far from securing himself from any violence which he feared from the usurper, which was his design in so doing, it seems to have been the most likely way of getting himself confined, and consequently debarred from an opportunity of revenging his father's death. To speak truth, our poet, by keeping too close to the groundwork of his plot, has fallen into an absurdity; there appears to be no reason at all in nature why this young prince did not put the usurper to death as soon as possible, especially as Hamlet is represented as a youth so brave and so careless of his own life. The case, indeed, is this: had Hamlet gone naturally to work, there would have been an end of our play. The poet, therefore, was obliged to delay his hero's revenge. His beginning his scenes of madness by his behavior to Ophelia was judicious, because by this means he might be thought to be mad for her, and not that his brain was disturbed by state affairs, which would have been dangerous.

Laertes' character is a very odd one; it is not easy to say whether it is good or bad; but his consenting to the villainous contrivance to murder Hamlet makes him much more a bad man than a good one. Surely, revenge for

such an accidental murder as that of his father could never justify him in any treacherous practices.

It does not appear whether Ophelia's madness was chiefly for her father's death or for the loss of Hamlet. It is not often that young women run mad for the loss of their fathers. It is more natural to suppose that her great sorrow proceeded from her father being killed by the man she loved, and thereby making it impossible for her ever to marry him.

— Sir Thomas Hanmer,
"Some Remarks on the Tragedy of Hamlet," 1736.

If the dramas of Shakespeare were to be characterized each by the particular excellence which distinguishes it from the rest, we must allow to the tragedy of "Hamlet" the praise of variety. The incidents are so numerous that the argument of the play would make a long tale. The scenes are interchangeably diversified with merriment and solemnity; with merriment that includes judicious and instructive observations; and solemnity not strained above the natural sentiments of man. New characters appear from time to time in continual succession, exhibiting various forms of life and particular modes of conversation. The pretended madness of Hamlet causes much mirth, the mournful distraction of Ophelia fills the heart with tenderness, and every personage produces the effect intended, from the Apparition, that in the First Act chills the blood with horror, to the Fop in the last, that exposes affection to just contempt.

The conduct is perhaps not wholly secure against objections. The action is, indeed, for the most part,

in continual progression, but there are some scenes which neither forward nor retard it. Of the feigned madness of Hamlet there appears no adequate cause, for he does nothing which he might not have done with the reputation of sanity. He plays the madman most when he treats Ophelia with so much rudeness, which seems to be useless and wanton cruelty.

— Dr. Samuel Johnson, "The Plays of Shakespeare," 1765.

Hamlet, at the command of his father's ghost, undertakes with seeming alacrity to revenge the murder; and declares that he will banish all other thoughts from his mind. He makes, however, but one effort to keep his word, and that is when he mistakes Polonius for the King. On another occasion he defers his purpose until he can find an opportunity of taking his uncle when he is least prepared for death. Though he assassinated Polonius by accident, yet he deliberately secures the execution of his school-fellows, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern. Their end, as he declares in a subsequent conversation with Horatio, gives him no concern, for they obtruded themselves into his affairs and he thought he had a right to destroy them. From his brutal conduct towards Ophelia he is no less accountable for her distraction and death. He interrupts the funeral, at which both the King and Queen were present; and, by such an outrage to decency, renders it still more necessary for the usurper to lay a second stratagem for his life, though the first had proved abortive. . . . Dr. Johnson has observed that to bring about a reconciliation with Laertes he has availed himself of a dishonest fallacy; and to conclude, it is obvious

to the most careless spectator or reader, that he kills the King at last to revenge himself, not his father.

— George Steevens,
"The Plays of William Shakespeare," 1778.

Hamlet's conversation with Laertes immediately before the fencing-scene was at the Queen's earnest entreaty; and though Dr. Johnson be pleased to give it the harsh name of "a dishonest fallacy," there are better, because more natural, judges who consider it as a most gentle and pathetic address; certainly Hamlet did not intend the death of Polonius; hence, unwittingly and by mere accident he injured Laertes, who declared that he was "satisfied in nature." Let the conduct and sentiments of Laertes in this interview and in his conversation with the usurper, together with his villainous design against the life of Hamlet, be examined and tried by any rules of honor or humanity, natural or artificial, and he must be considered as a treacherous, cowardly, diabolical wretch.

— Joseph Ritson, "Remarks," 1783.

> The time is out of joint; O cursed spite,
> That ever I was born to set it right!

In these words, I imagine, is the key to Hamlet's whole procedure, and to me it is clear that Shakespeare sought to depict a great deed laid upon a soul unequal to the performance of it. In this view I find the piece composed throughout. Here is an oak-tree planted in a costly vase, which should have received into its bosom only lovely flowers; the roots spread out, the vase is shivered to pieces.

A beautiful, pure, and most moral nature, without the strength of nerve which makes the hero, sinks beneath a burden which it can neither bear nor throw off; every duty is holy to him — this too hard. The impossible is required of him, — not the impossible in itself, but the impossible to him. How he winds, turns, agonizes, advances, and recoils, ever reminded, ever reminding himself, and at last almost loses his purpose from his thoughts without ever again recovering his peace of mind. . . .

— J. W. von Goethe, "Wilhelm Meister," 1795.

Hamlet is brave and careless of death; but he vacillates from sensibility, and procrastinates from thought, and loses the power of action in the energy of resolve. Thus it is that this tragedy presents a direct contrast to that of Macbeth; the one proceeds with the utmost slowness, the other with a crowded and breathless rapidity.

The effect of this overbalance of the imaginative power is beautifully illustrated in the everlasting broodings and superfluous activities of Hamlet's mind, which, unseated from its healthy relation, is constantly occupied with the world within, and abstracted from the world without, — giving substance to shadows, and throwing a mist over all commonplace actualities. It is the nature of thought to be indefinite; — definiteness belongs to external imagery alone. Hamlet feels this; his senses are in a state of trance, and he looks upon external things as hieroglyphics. His soliloquy —

O that this too too solid flesh would melt, etc.,

springs from that craving after the indefinite — for that which is not — which most easily besets men of genius;

and the self-delusion common to this temper of mind is finely exemplified in the character which Hamlet gives of himself —

> It cannot be
> But I am pigeon-liver'd, and lack gall
> To make oppression bitter.

He mistakes the seeing his chains for the breaking of them, delays action till action is of no use, and dies the victim of mere circumstance and accident.

— S. T. Coleridge, "Notes and Lectures on Shakespeare," 1808.

Shakespeare wished to impress upon us the truth; that action is the chief end of existence, — that no faculties of intellect, however brilliant, can be considered valuable, or indeed otherwise than as misfortunes, if they withdraw us from, or render us repugnant to, action. In enforcing this moral truth, Shakespeare has shown the fulness and force of his powers; all that is amiable and excellent in nature is combined in Hamlet, with the exception of one quality. He is a man living in meditation, called upon to act by every motive human and divine, but the great object of his life is defeated by continually resolving to do, yet doing nothing but resolve.

— S. T. Coleridge, "Lectures on Shakespeare and Milton," 1812.

Consider "Hamlet" in whatsoever light you will, it stands quite alone, most peculiarly apart from any other play of Shakespeare's. A vast deal has been written upon the subject, and by a great number of commentators, by men born in different countries, educated after different fashions. We might hope to see a second Shakespeare, if the world

had ever possessed a commentator worthy of "Hamlet." Such a man as Shakespeare imagined in him to whom his hero bequeathed the task to

> report me and my cause aright
> To the unsatisfied.

"Hamlet," to my mind, is essentially a psychological exercise and study. The hero, from whose acts and feelings everything in the drama takes its color and pursues its course, is doubtless insane. But the species of mental malady under which he suffers, is of the subtlest character.

— William Maginn, "Shakespeare Papers," 1836.

Hamlet himself has caused more of perplexity and discussion than any other character in the whole range of art. The charm of his mind and person amounts to an almost universal fascination. One man considers him great, but wicked; another, good, but weak; a third, that he lacks courage and dares not act; a fourth that he has too much intellect for his will, and so reflects away the time of action; some conclude that his madness is half genuine; others, that it is wholly feigned. Doubtless there are facts in the delineation which, considered by themselves, would sustain any one of these views; but none of them seems reconcilable with all of the facts taken together. Yet, notwithstanding this diversity of opinion all agree in thinking of Hamlet as an actual person. While all are impressed with the truth of the character, no one is satisfied with another's explanation of it. The question is, Why such unanimity as to his being a man, and at the same time such diversity of opinion as to what sort of man he is?

— H. N. Hudson, "Introduction to Hamlet," 1870.

The fact is, that Shakespeare never intended to represent Hamlet as mad or half mad or verging on madness. He expressly made him a feigner of madness, and when he wished to create real madness and contrast it with feigned madness, he created the real madness of Ophelia and did it with wonderful truth and skill. There is not a trace of madness in Hamlet. . . . Fancy a mad doctor asked by Claudius or Polonius about Hamlet, hearing him say: "I could be bounded in a nutshell and think myself king of infinite space, had I not bad dreams." What would he say, shaking his foolish head? "Sire, with the deepest regret, I am of opinion that Prince Hamlet is suffering from cerebral disease, likely, at any moment, to become dangerous." But if Horatio were present, he would say: "What an ass the man is! What does he know? The Prince has thought this and talked of the idea in it a hundred times at Wittenberg." . . . After all, the main question with regard to this matter is — not whether Hamlet was mad or half mad or not mad at all — but whether Shakespeare meant him to be mad — and to that there is but one answer possible.

— Stopford Brooke, "Ten More Plays of Shakespeare," 1913.

So much has been written upon "Hamlet," that one can hardly descry the play through the rolling cloud of witness. The critical guns detonate with such uproar, and exploding, diffuse such quantities of gas, as to impose on us that moral stupor which I understand to be one of the calculated effects of heavy artillery in warfare. The poor infantry-man discerns not in the din that half of these missiles are flying in one direction, half in another,

still less how large a proportion of both hit no mark at all. He can scarcely command nerve for a steady look at the thing itself. This loud authority confuses us all. It *starts* us thinking of "Hamlet," not as an acted play but as a mystery, a psychological study, an effort of genius so grandiose, vast, vague, amorphous, nebulous, that men of admitted genius — even such men as Coleridge and Goethe, — tracking it, have lost their way in the profound obscure.

Now, with all the courage of humility, I say that this is, nine-tenths of it, rubbish. I insist that we take Shakespeare first, and before any of these imposing fellows. At all events, he wrote the play, and they did not. . . . It is never a test of the highest art that it is unintelligible. It is rather the last triumph of a masterpiece — the triumph definitely passing it for a classic — that all men in their degree can understand and enjoy it. . . . Do we, knowing Shakespeare, suppose that he wrote the longest of his plays to hide what he meant? . . . . .

It is Ophelia who first brings word of Hamlet's derangement; and we note how her old dotard of a father jumps at each piece of evidence, accepting with fresh glee whatever confirms his wrong conclusion, until he can hold his delighted folly no longer.

> Come, go with me: I will go seek the king.
> This is the very ecstasy of love!

We note, moreover, that in dealing with all such complacent fools — not only Polonius, but Rosencrantz and Guildenstern — Hamlet deliberately and with relish *enacts* the madman. We watch him tucking his arm under Polonius's and drawing him aside:

Do you see yonder cloud that's almost in shape of a camel? . . .

But he never talks like that to the sane man, Horatio. Horatio knows; Gertrude, his mother, knows too. . . . No, Hamlet is sane. Considering the shock he has undergone, we may almost say there was never man saner.

— Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch,
"Notes on Shakespeare's Workmanship," 1917.

Other Characters

Of the character of Ophelia, and the situation which she holds in the action of the play, I need say little. Everything about her is young, beautiful, artless, innocent, and touching. She comes before us in striking contrast to the Queen, who, fallen as she is, feels the influence of her simple and happy purity. Amid the frivolity, flattery, fawning, and artifice of a corrupted court, she moves in all the unpolluted loveliness of nature. But we feel from the first that her lot is to be mournful. The world in which she lives is not worthy of her and soon, as we connect her destiny with Hamlet, we know that darkness is to overshadow her, and that sadness and sorrow will step in between her and the ghost-haunted avenger of his father's murder. Perhaps the description of her death by the Queen is poetical rather than dramatic; but its exquisite beauty prevails, and Ophelia, dying and dead, is the same Ophelia that first won our love. She has passed away from the earth like a beautiful air — a delightful dream. There would have been no place for her in the agitation and tempest of the final catastrophe.

— Thomas Campbell, "Letters on Shakespeare," 1818.

Neglected had Ophelia been by one and all, — all but Horatio, that noble soul of unpretending worth, and he knew not what ailed her till she was past all cure. He it is who feelingly, and poetically, and truly describes the maniac; he it is who brings her in; he it is who follows her away, — dumb all the while! And who with right soul but must have been speechless amidst these gentle ravings?

— Thomas Campbell, "Blackwood's Magazine," 1833.

From the first we have a sense of a most pathetic orphaned loneliness about Ophelia. Throughout, she has no one to turn to, no woman to give her advice. (For let us note that, unlike many another heroine of Shakespeare's, she is not even allowed a waiting-maid. Save the Queen, there is no other woman in the play-bill. And what kind of help or advice could such a woman as the Queen give?) On the other hand, of male admonition — of advice which is precisely the kind of advice she does not want — the poor child gets enough and to spare. Her brother has no sooner gone than her father turns on her and reads her another lecture — reams of worldly counsel, all withered, conventional. Poor Ophelia!

If Laertes and Polonius seem (and are) tedious as well as conventional, may we not recognize that Shakespeare deliberately made them so? In this Court of Denmark an abyss of horror has been half-opened to us. Earth has parted, and for a moment given up its dead; has shut again not yet surrendering the secret. . . . On the stage . . . these two courtiers, father and son, prate saws on the proper conduct of life, meaningless as they

are wise; batter them on the brain of a helpless girl. . . . She, a helpless victim, is being prated to her doom by father and brother, the only two in the world she might naturally have counted on for help.

— Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch,
"Notes on Shakespeare's Workmanship," 1917.

Horatio is one of the very noblest and most beautiful of Shakespeare's characters; and there is not a single loose stitch in his make-up; he is at all times superbly self-contained; he feels deeply, but never gushes nor runs over; a most manly soul, full alike of strength, tenderness, and solidity. But he moves so quietly in the drama that his rare traits of character have hardly had justice done them. Should we undertake to go through the play without him, we might feel then how much of the best spirit and impression of the scenes is owing to his presence. He is the medium whereby many of the hero's finest and noblest qualities are conveyed to us, yet himself so clear and simple and transparent that he scarcely catches the attention. . . . The great charm of Horatio's unselfishness is that he seems not to be himself in the least aware of it; "as one, in suffering all, that suffers nothing." His mild scepticism at first, "touching this dreaded sight twice seen of us," is exceedingly graceful and scholarly. And indeed all that comes from him marks the presence of a calm, clear head, keeping touch and time perfectly with a good heart.

— H. N. Hudson, "Introduction to Hamlet," 1870.

FAMILIAR PASSAGES IN "HAMLET"

When you first take a play of Shakespeare's in hand, you soon begin to have the feeling that you have read this before, though you know you have not. The fact is, Shakespeare expressed the general mind and common feeling of us all in phrases so packed with meaning, so full of insight into human nature, so happy in figure and choice of words, that we have adopted them and added them to our stock of everyday language. Only the Bible has contributed more of these stock phrases to modern English speech. The result is that, without knowing it, we are constantly quoting words and even whole lines from Shakespeare's plays, as, for instance, when we speak of "the king's English," "sweets to the sweet," "much virtue in If," "at a pin's fee," "what's in a name?" "brevity is the soul of wit," "last, but not least," "every inch a king," "the tyrant custom," "single blessedness," "as easy as lying," "the short and the long of it," "a lion among ladies," "for ever and a day," "give the devil his due," "in my mind's eye," "the game is up," "forget and forgive," "cudgel thy brains," "what's done is done," "the pink of courtesy," "parting is such sweet sorrow," "I'll not budge an inch," etc.

With the exception of "The Merchant of Venice" and "Macbeth," probably none of the plays has con-

tributed more familiar phrases to our speech to-day than "Hamlet." Here are some of the most important. Others may be found in Bartlett's "Familiar Quotations." It will interest you to try to place them by recalling when and where and by whom they were spoken. How many of them had you heard of before you studied the play?

1. For this relief much thanks.
2. But, look, the morn, in russet mantle clad,
   Walks o'er the dew of yon high eastern hill.
3. A little more than kin, and less than kind.
4. Customary suits of solemn black.
5. O, that this too too solid flesh would melt.
6. How weary, stale, flat and unprofitable
   Seem to me all the uses of this world!
7. Hyperion to a satyr.
8. Frailty, thy name is woman!
9. Thrift, thrift, Horatio! the funeral baked meats
   Did coldly furnish forth the marriage tables.
10. In my mind's eye.
11. He was a man, take him for all in all,
    I shall not look upon his like again.
12. In the dead vast and middle of the night.
13. More in sorrow than in anger.
14. Sweet, not lasting.
15. The primrose path of dalliance.
16. Those friends thou hast, and their adoption tried,
    Grapple them to thy soul with hoops of steel.
17. Rich not gaudy.
18. Neither a borrower nor a lender be.

19. To thine own self be true,
And it must follow, as the night the day,
Thou canst not then be false to any man.
20. To the manner born.
21. More honoured in the breach than the observance.
22. I could a tale unfold whose lightest word
Would harrow up thy soul.
23. The secrets of my prison house.
24. Sent to my account
With all my imperfections on my head.
25. Something is rotten in the state of Denmark.
26. There are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio,
Than are dreamt of in your philosophy.
27. The time is out of joint: O cursed spite
That ever I was born to set it right.
28. Brevity is the soul of wit.
29. 'T is true 't is pity;
And pity 't is 't is true.
30. Caviare to the general.
31. Though this be madness, yet there is method in 't.
32. There is nothing either good or bad, but thinking makes it so.
33. The play 's the thing.
34. The devil hath power
To assume a pleasing shape.
35. To be, or not to be; that is the question.
36. The slings and arrows of outrageous fortune.
37. The thousand natural shocks
That flesh is heir to.
38. 'T is a consummation
Devoutly to be wished.

39. Ay, there 's the rub.
40. When we have shuffled off this mortal coil.
41. The whips and scorns of time.
42. The insolence of office.
43. The undiscovered country from whose bourn
No traveller returns.
44. Thus conscience doth make cowards of us all.
45. Rich gifts wax poor when givers prove unkind.
46. The glass of fashion and the mould of form,
The observed of all observers.
47. Like sweet bells jangled, out of tune and harsh.
48. Let the galled jade wince, our withers are unwrung.
49. Suit the action to the word, the word to the action.
50. Frighted with false fire?
51. They fool me to the top of my bent.
52. I will speak daggers to her, but will use none.
53. O, my offence is rank, it smells to heaven.
54. Dead, for a ducat, dead!
55. Lay not that flattering unction to your soul.
56. I must be cruel, only to be kind.
57. 'T is the sport to have the enginer
Hoist with his own petar.
58. When sorrows come, they come not single spies,
But in battalions.
59. There 's such divinity doth hedge a king,
That treason can but peep to what it would.
60. There is pansies, that 's for thoughts.
61. Sweets to the sweet: farewell!
62. The cat will mew and dog will have his day.
63. There 's a divinity that shapes our ends,
Rough-hew them how we will.

64. There 's a special providence in the fall of a sparrow.
65. If thou didst ever hold me in thy heart,
Absent thee from felicity awhile,
And in this harsh world draw thy breath in pain
To tell my story.
66. The rest is silence.

WHAT WE KNOW ABOUT SHAKESPEARE

The facts that we know with absolute certainty about William Shakespeare can be given in a few meagre paragraphs. Some bare, prosaic records in Stratford and in the Stationers' Register in London, a few signatures, a will, a deed or two, an application for a coat-of-arms, an occasional mention of his name in court proceedings, in lists of actors, and in the works of fellow authors, — this is about all we have as the basis for a life of one of the greatest men that the world has produced. Traditions and quaint fanciful stories exist, as we might expect, in infinite number and variety. Many of these date back to the poet's own time, and therefore may have in them at least an element of truth. By far the greater number, however, gained popularity nearly a century after his death, when the curiosity of an age intensely interested in the drama began to look back and talk about the most marvellous of all the makers of plays. Few of these later traditions can be relied upon. Yet from the few scrappy facts that we have, supplemented by the earlier legends, and above all by a study of the plays themselves, it is possible to make a story of the poet's life, which, though by no means complete, is full enough to give us a fairly clear understanding of his growth in fame and business prosperity, and his development as a dramatist.

Few facts known about Shakespeare.

It is not strange that we know so little about Shakespeare. His age was not one of biographical writing. To-day a man of not one tenth part of his genius is besought by reporters for interviews concerning his life;

he is persuaded by admiring friends to write his memoirs; as his end approaches, every important newspaper in the land has an article of several columns ready to print the instant that word of his death comes over the wire. Three hundred and fifty years ago nothing of this kind was possible. Newspapers and magazines, genealogies and contemporary history did not exist. Encyclopædias, dictionaries of names, directories, "blue-books," and volumes of "Who's Who" had not been dreamed of. Personal correspondence was meagre, and what few letters were written seldom were preserved. Above all, a taste for reading the lives of men had not been formed. In fact, it was not until fifty years after Shakespeare's time that the art of biographical writing in England was really born. When we remember, in addition to these facts, that actors and playwrights then held a distinctly inferior position in society, and by the growing body of Puritans were looked upon with contempt and extreme disfavor, it is not surprising that no special heed was paid to the life of Shakespeare. On the contrary, it is astonishing that we know as much as we do about him, — fully as much as we know about most of the writers of his time, and even of many who lived much later.

Why we know so little about Shakespeare.

In the records of the 16th century there are numerous references to Shakespeares living in the midland counties of England, especially in Warwickshire. For the most part, they seem to have been substantial yeomen and plain farmers of sound practical sense rather than men of learning or culture. Some of them owned land and prospered. Such a one was John Shakespeare, who moved to Strat-

The poet's father, John Shakespeare.

ford-on-Avon about 1550 and became a dealer in malt and corn, meat, wool, and leather. He is referred to sometimes as a glover and a butcher. Probably he was both, and dealt besides in all the staples that farmers about the village produced and brought to market to sell. The fact that he could not write, which was nothing unusual among men of his station in the 16th century, did not prevent his prospering in business. For more than twenty years after the earliest mention of his name in the Stratford records, he is spoken of frequently and always in a way to show us that his financial standing in the community was steadily increasing. He seems also to have been a man of affairs. From one office to another he rose until in 1568 he held the position of High Bailiff, or Mayor of Stratford. Eleven years earlier his fortunes had been increased by his marriage to Mary Arden, the daughter of a prosperous farmer of the neighboring village of Wilmcote, who bequeathed to his daughter a house, with fifty acres of land, and a considerable sum of money. It is not fair, therefore, to speak of the father of William Shakespeare, as some have done, as "an uneducated peasant," or as "a provincial shopkeeper." At the time of the birth of his illustrious son he was one of the most prominent men in Stratford, decidedly well-to-do, respected and trusted by all.

The year before John Shakespeare brought his bride from Wilmcote to Stratford-on-Avon, he had purchased a house in Henley Street, and there he and his wife were living when their children were born. It was a cottage two stories high, with dormer windows, and of timber and plaster construction. Though frequently repaired and built over during the three hundred and fifty years that

The house in which Shakespeare was born.

have passed, it still remains in general appearance much the same as it looked in 1556. Simple, crude, plain, — it is nevertheless the most famous house in England, if not in the world. Noted men and women from all parts of the earth have visited Stratford to see it. Essays, stories, and poems have been written about it. Preserved in the care of the Memorial Society, it is the shrine of the literary pilgrim and the Mecca of tourists who flock during the summer to the quaint old village on the Avon. For here, in a small bare room on the second floor, William Shakespeare was born.

How little we know of Shakespeare, compared with even a minor poet of the 19th century, is shown by the fact that we are not certain of the exact date on which the greatest of all poets was born. The records of Holy Trinity Church in Stratford show that the child was baptized on April 26, 1564, and since it was the custom at that time for the baptism of children to take place on the third day after birth, it has been generally agreed that William was born on April 23, and that date is celebrated as his birthday. Tradition tells us, and probably truthfully, that it was also on this date, April 23, in 1616, that he died.

Date of the poet's birth, April 23, 1564.

Of the poet's boyhood we know next to nothing. It is a mistake, however, to assume that he lacked educational opportunities. There was in Stratford an excellent free Grammar School such as a bailiff's son would attend, and to which it is reasonable to suppose that the boy was sent. Here he studied chiefly Latin, for education then in England consisted almost entirely of the classics, especially Vergil, Ovid, Horace, and the comedies

Shakespeare's boyhood and schooling, 1571–1577.

SHAKESPEARE'S HOUSE AT STRATFORD-ON-AVON

THE ROOM WHERE SHAKESPEARE WAS BORN

of Plautus and Terence. The comment of Ben Jonson, his fellow dramatist of later years, that Shakespeare had "small Latin and less Greek," should not be taken too literally. Compared with the profound scholarship of a college-trained man like Jonson, the Stratford boy had, to be sure, but little knowledge of the classics. Yet there is every evidence to show that he understood both Latin and French pretty well, and that he knew the Bible thoroughly. It is clear, too, that by nature he was a boy of remarkable powers of observation and keenly retentive memory, who used every opportunity about him for acquiring information and ideas. Whether he went to school or not would have made but little difference to one whose mind possessed rare powers of developing and training itself. Like Burns and Lincoln, he was educated more by people and the world of Nature about him than by books and formal teaching.

Five years in Stratford after leaving school, 1577–1582.

Ordinarily a boy of the 16th century would remain at the Grammar School from seven to fourteen, but there is a well-founded tradition that Shakespeare left in 1577, when he was thirteen years old, and never attended school again. About this time the records show that his father's financial difficulties began. Another pair of hands was needed at home to help in the support of the family, and William was the oldest son. Just how he was occupied, however, between his fourteenth and eighteenth years we cannot say. Probably he assisted his father in his declining business. One of the bits of Stratford gossip, collected by the antiquarian Aubrey, states that he was "in his younger years a school-master in the country," and another tells us that "when he was a boy he exercised his father's

trade. When he killed a calf, he would doe it in a high style and make a speech." It may be, as another reference seems to imply, that he was employed in the office of a lawyer. But we must not put too much confidence in these traditions, which, like all stories passed on by word of mouth, grew and changed as the years went by. As much as we should like to know of his employment, his reading, and all the circumstances that were developing his mind and character during these five important years, we must remember that "there is no reason why anything should have been recorded; he was an obscure boy living in an inland village, before the age of newspapers, and out of relation with people of fashion and culture. During this period as little is known of him as is known of Cromwell during the same period; as little, but no less. This fact gives no occasion either for surprise or scepticism as to his marvellous genius; it was an entirely normal fact concerning boys growing up in unliterary times and in rural communities."[1]

His marriage to Anne Hathaway, 1582.

The first really authentic record we have of Shakespeare after his school days is that of the baptism of his daughter Susanna, on May 26, 1583. The previous year, when only eighteen, he had married Anne Hathaway, the daughter of a farmer in the neighboring village of Shottery. This picturesque hamlet was reached then from Stratford, as it is to-day, by a delightful foot-path through the wide and fertile fields of Warwickshire. Perhaps no other spot connected with the poet's life, except the house in which he was born, is dearer to people's hearts than the quaint old thatched-

[1] H. W. Mabie: "William Shakespeare, Poet, Dramatist, and Man," page 51.

ANNE HATHAWAY'S COTTAGE AT SHOTTERY

INTERIOR OF ANNE HATHAWAY'S COTTAGE

roof building known as "Anne Hathaway's cottage"; for it still stands, at least in part, as it was when the "youthful lover went courting through the meadows, past the 'bank where the wild thyme blows,' to Shottery." In February, 1585, two years after the birth of Susanna, twins were born, and soon after the youthful husband and father left his native town to seek his fortunes in London.

Reasons for leaving Stratford: the poaching tradition.

It would be most interesting to know when and how and just why Shakespeare left Stratford, but no documents have been found that throw any certain light upon this portion of his life. It has generally been assumed that he found his way to the metropolis soon after the birth of his twins. Probably he walked by the highway through Oxford and Wycombe, or if he rode it was on horseback, purchasing a saddle-horse at the beginning of his journey, as was the custom then, and selling it upon his arrival in the city. There is an old tradition that, with other young men of the village, he had been involved in a poaching escapade upon the estate of Sir Thomas Lucy. In the first regular biography of Shakespeare written by Nicholas Rowe in 1709, nearly a hundred years after the poet's death, the story of this adventure is given as an actual fact. "He had, by a misfortune common enough among young fellows, fallen into ill company, and among them some that made a frequent practice of deer-stealing, engaged him with them more than once in robbing a park that belonged to Sir Thomas Lucy of Charlecote, near Stratford. For this he was prosecuted by that gentleman, as he thought, somewhat too severely; and, in order to revenge that ill-usage, he made a ballad upon him, and though this, probably the first essay of his poetry, be lost,

yet it is said to have been so very bitter that it redoubled the prosecution against him to that degree that he was obliged to leave his business and family in Warwickshire and shelter himself in London." No trace of this ballad has been found; indeed, the whole story rests on gossip, and must not be taken too literally. It is supported, in a way, by the fact that Justice Shallow in "The Merry Wives of Windsor" is unquestionably a humorous sketch, or caricature, of Sir Thomas Lucy of Charlecote Hall, thus suggesting that whether he had been prosecuted and harried out of town by his wealthy neighbor or not, the youthful poet had some personal reasons for ridiculing the head of the Lucy family.

Stratford too narrow a field for Shakespeare.

Still another account explains Shakespeare's departure from Stratford by stating that he joined a company of strolling players. Though this may possibly have been the means of his finding congenial travelling companions, it seems more natural to suppose that he left his native village much as a boy to-day leaves a remote country town and goes to the city to seek his fortune. His father's affairs, we know, had been steadily declining; his own family was growing; business in many trades through the midland counties was poor; any ambitious and high-spirited youth would have become restless and discontented. What was more natural, under these circumstances, than the breaking of home-ties and moving to London for its larger opportunities?

The traditions that Shakespeare, upon his arrival in the capital about 1585, was employed in a printer's shop and a lawyer's office, are extremely doubtful. It seems much more likely that he became connected with the

theatre at once, either as a call-boy in the building itself, or as one of those who held the horses on which gallants of the city rode to the play-house. That he should have turned to the theatre rather than to business to get a foothold in London is not strange. Companies of players had frequently visited Stratford in his boyhood. Indeed, the people of his native town seem to have been exceptionally fond of the drama, a fact, as Mr. Mabie has pointed out, "of very obvious bearing on the education of Shakespeare's imagination and the bent of his mind toward a vocation." As a lad of eleven he probably saw the pageant at Kenilworth Castle, in honor of Queen Elizabeth's visit to the Earl of Leicester. The processions and gorgeous costumes of this occasion, the tableaux and scenes set forth by the actors from the city must have made a profound impression on the mind of the imaginative boy. Moreover, it was a time of widespread interest in everything dramatic. When Shakespeare was born in 1564, there was not a single building in London devoted to the presentation of plays. At the time of his death, fifty-two years later, there were at least nine. The development of the drama from simple morality plays and historical pageants given in tavern-yards and on village greens, to "Julius Caesar" and "Hamlet," covered the period of the poet's youth; so that when he arrived in London, more than ever before or since in English history, the theatre was of compelling interest and attraction.

Shakespeare's first connection with the London theatres.

The six years after his arrival in London are a blank. We must imagine him rapidly rising through various positions at the Rose or the Curtain, for a young man of his genius and enterprise would not long remain obscure.

It is certain that he became an actor before he wrote for the stage. By 1592, however, he had evidently earned sufficient fame as a playwright to stir the jealousy of Robert Greene, a rival author, who in that year refers bitterly to him as "in his owne conceit the only *Shakes-scene* in a countrie," and then parodies a line from an early play that is attributed to Shakespeare. While as an actor he was learning stagecraft in the best possible school, he was undoubtedly trying his prentice hand by mending old plays and contributing bits to the work of his older companions. These earliest dramatic writings may have been numerous, but they are either entirely lost or hidden in plays credited to other men. His progress from a clerk in a country store to a writer of drama is thus admirably described by Sidney Lee: "A young man of two-and-twenty, burdened with a wife and children, he had left his home in the little country town of Stratford-on-Avon in 1586 to seek his fortune in London. Without friends, without money, he had, like any other stage-struck youth, set his heart on becoming an actor in the metropolis. Fortune favoured him. He sought and won the humble office of call-boy in a London playhouse; but no sooner had his foot touched the lowest rung of the theatrical ladder than his genius taught him that the topmost rung was within his reach. He tried his hand on the revision of an old play, and the manager was not slow to recognize an unmatched gift for dramatic writing.[1]

His earliest work as actor and playwright.

It was not until 1593, when Shakespeare was twenty-nine, that he appeared openly in the field of authorship. On April 18 of that year his long poem "Venus and

[1] Sidney Lee: "Shakespeare and the Elizabethan Playgoer," page 32.

Adonis" was entered at Stationers' Hall for publication. It was printed by Richard Field, a Stratford man who had come to London somewhat earlier than the poet, and though published without a name on the title-page, the dedication to the Earl of Southampton was signed "William Shakespeare." The same is true of "Lucrece," which was registered in May of 1594. These two long poems must have had wide popularity, for they are often praised by critics of the day, and in the poet's own lifetime several editions of both were issued. They were the means by which Shakespeare became known as an author, for though some of his dramatic work may have been printed before this, plays were not regarded then as literature to be read, whereas these poems were issued under the poet's supervision for the reading public, and were thus "the first fruits of his conscious artistic life."

The first books published under his name.

Both as actor and playwright, Shakespeare's fame rapidly increased after 1594; in fact, the eight years that followed saw him rise to the height of his powers. His name stands first on the list of "principal Comedians" who acted Jonson's "Every Man in his Humour" in 1598. Francis Meres in his "Palladis Tamia," published in the same year, speaks of the "mellifluous and honey-tongued Shakespeare," and then proceeds to name twelve of his plays and compare him favorably with the Roman dramatists Seneca and Plautus. Even if this list is incomplete we see that already before 1598 he had written three of his most charming comedies, one of them "The Merchant of Venice," and at least one of the tragedies that ranks among his very greatest. From then until his retirement

Progress in fame and fortune.

to Stratford fourteen years later, there are frequent references to his plays which appeared with astonishing rapidity. The dates when they were written and first acted are often uncertain, but before 1612 he had produced more than twenty dramas which together constitute the most marvelous body of literary work that ever came from a human mind.

As an actor he did not continue to excel. If we may trust the sentiments of the sonnets, it is clear that he thoroughly disliked this part of his profession. Probably after 1604 he ceased to appear on the stage altogether. Financially it is certain that he was prosperous. We know, for one thing, that he owned shares in several London theatres, notably the Globe, where many of his own plays were first presented to enthusiastic London audiences. Then his successful application to the College of Heralds in 1599, on behalf of his father, for a grant of coat-of-arms; his purchase of several pieces of property in his native town; the records of lawsuits to recover debts which were owed him; numerous references which show us that he was looked upon as a man of means and standing; his friendship with Ben Jonson and other learned men of his day, — these facts, with the traditions of later generations, all convince us that the author of "Hamlet" and "Macbeth" was a successful man of affairs, as well as one of the most prominent and best-loved dramatists of his time.

Although Shakespeare made London his home after 1584 or 1585, it is probable that he often visited Stratford where his family continued to reside. An old legend states that he frequently put up at the Crown Inn in Oxford on his way to and fro. Documents exist, moreover, which

Holy Trinity Parish Church, Stratford-on-Avon

GOOD FREND FOR IESVS SAKE FORBEARE,
TO DIGG THE DVST ENCLOASED HEARE:
BLESTE BE Ỳ MAN Ỳ SPARES THES STONES,
AND CVRST BE HE Ỳ MOVES MY BONES.

Inscription on Shakespeare's Tomb

IVDICIO PYLIVM GENIO SOCRATEM ARTE MARONEM
TERRA TEGIT POPVLVS MÆRET OLYMPVS HABET

STAY PASSENGER WHY GOEST THOV BY SO FAST,
READ IF THOV CANST WHOM ENVIOVS DEATH HATH PLAST
WITH IN THIS MONVMENT SHAKSPEARE: WITH WHOME
QVICK NATVRE DIDE WHOSE NAME DOTH DECK Ỳ TOMBE
FAR MORE THEN COST: SIEH ALL Ỳ HE HATH WRITT,
LEAVES LIVING ART BVT PAGE TO SERVE HIS WITT.

OBIT ANO DO 1616
ÆTATIS 53 DIE 23 AP.

Inscription on Shakespeare's Monument, Trinity Church, Stratford-on-Avon

show that he was constantly investing money in real estate in his native village, to which he seems to have looked forward as a pleasant retreat after the strenuous days of actor, theatre-manager, and playwright were over. Probably the breaking off of London ties was gradual; but it is doubtful whether he was much in the city after 1612, the year in which "Henry VIII," the last of his plays, was written. He now appears in the records as "William Shakespeare, Gent., of Stratford-on-Avon"; and there he lived with his well-won honors, respected and loved, for four years.

Retirement from London, 1612.

In the early spring of 1616, Shakespeare's youngest daughter, Judith, was married. A month later he made his will, and on April 25 the register of Christ Church in Stratford shows that he was buried. According to the lettering on the monument he died on April 23, and that date, the date of his birth fifty-two years before, has been generally accepted as the day of his death. He was buried in the chancel of the fine old church, not far from the spot where he had been christened, and over the place where he lies may still be seen the quaint lines which tradition tells us he himself wrote to be inscribed above him:—

Death in Stratford, April 23, 1616.

> Good Frend for Iesus Sake Forbeare,
> To Digg the Dust Encloased Heare:
> Blest be Ye Man Yt Spares thes Stones,
> And Curst be he Yt Moves My Bones.

Whether the poet wrote these threatening words or not, no sexton has disturbed his remains, and the grave of William Shakespeare in the beautiful church by the river he loved has remained unopened.

Difficulties of determining the dates of the plays.

One of the problems of Shakespearean scholars for more than a century has been to determine the exact years in which the various plays were written. For just as we have no details of the poet's life, so are the records of his work either extremely meagre or entirely lacking. Not a single manuscript of anything that Shakespeare wrote has been preserved. The fire which burned the Globe theatre to the ground in 1613 may have destroyed the original pages of all the dramas: and yet, interesting and precious as they would be to us to-day, it is doubtful whether we can attribute to their loss our lack of knowledge as to just when each was written. We must remember that in Elizabethan times plays were not considered literature to be read. After they had served their purpose on the stage and passed out of popular favor, they were set aside and wholly neglected. As long as there was the slightest chance of their being in demand at the theatre, the author and companies of actors did their best to keep them out of print altogether, apparently in the belief that attendance at the playhouse would suffer if the drama in book form was in the hands of the people. Moreover, among the most cultivated men of the day, and especially among the growing body of Puritans, there was a strong prejudice against the whole theatrical business. By them, actors were held in low esteem, and plays were looked upon as things of light, or even questionable, character. The modern conception that regards the drama as a high and artistic form of literature had not been born.

Under these circumstances it is not surprising that during his own lifetime only sixteen of Shakespeare's thirty-seven plays appeared in print. These editions, which are known to-day as the Quartos, were small, cheaply-made, paper-bound pamphlets usually sold for a sixpence each. It is generally believed that they were issued without the poet's consent, and probably even against his wishes. Several of them were undoubtedly printed from shorthand notes taken slyly at a performance in the theatre. Others may have been set up from the soiled and tattered copies of a needy actor who had been secretly bribed to part with them. The confusion and strange blunders in the text show us that these Quartos were the careless and hasty work of piratical printers; indeed, it is almost certain that Shakespeare himself did not revise or in any way prepare a single one of them for the press.

The Quarto editions of the plays.

Inexact and inadequate as are the pirated Quarto editions, they would probably be the only plays of Shakespeare known to us to-day had it not been for a remarkable book that appeared seven years after his death. In 1623 two of the poet's friends put forth in a single volume his complete dramatic works. These men, John Heminge and Henry Condell, — names which are forever linked with Shakespeare's, — were actors in the same company with him, and, with Burbage, were joint owners of the Globe Theatre. The great dramatist, as a token of lifelong friendship, in his will bequeathed to them and to Burbage the sum of twenty-six shillings and eight pence to buy rings; and they in turn collected and edited his plays "to keepe the memory of so worthy a friend and fellow

The First Folio edition of the plays.

alive." It is a large volume of 901 pages in two columns of fine print, and on the title-page, besides a crude engraving of the poet, are these words:

Mr. William
SHAKESPEARES
COMEDIES,
HISTORIES, &
TRAGEDIES

Published according to the True Original Copies.

LONDON

Printed by Isaac Iaggard, and Ed. Blount. 1623.

This is perhaps the most important volume in the whole range of English literature, for in it appeared for the first time in print twenty of Shakespeare's plays, among them "The Tempest," "Twelfth Night," "Julius Caesar," "Macbeth," "Cymbeline," and others of the dramatist's masterpieces. Heminge and Condell had access to stage copies of these plays which in another generation might have been lost or destroyed by fire; so that their work, coming when it did, saved for us a large portion of the finest poetry and deepest wisdom of Shakespeare's mind. It is no wonder that the 156 extant copies of this notable book are preserved as priceless treasures; for no other single volume ever did a greater service to literature than this Folio of 1623.

Although Heminge and Condell must have known in many cases the exact years in which Shakespeare was at work upon his various plays, they did not consider such

information of sufficient interest to include it in their edition. Well might we spare some of the tiresome eulogies, which they printed in their preface, for a page or two of facts that they so easily might have included. As it stands, however, the First Folio helps but little in arranging the chronology of the comedies and tragedies. And yet, in spite of all difficulties, by painstaking research scholars have come to a pretty general agreement upon the dates of composition of most of the plays. The evidence which they have used may be divided into two kinds, external and internal, — that is, evidence found outside of the plays, and evidence found within the works themselves. External evidence consists of such information as has been obtained from records of performances in diaries and letters; quotations and allusions in other books; entries in the register of the Stationers' Company, which for nearly three hundred years regulated the publication of all books in England; records of the Master of Revels at Court, and of course the dates on the title-pages of the Quartos themselves. A good illustration of this sort of evidence is the journal of a certain Dr. Simon Forman, in which he mentions the fact that in 1610 and 1611 he witnessed performances of "Macbeth," "Cymbeline," and "The Winter's Tale" at the Globe. Another is the celebrated passage in the "Palladis Tamia," or "Wit's Treasury," of Francis Meres, which was published in 1598: "As *Plautus* and *Seneca* are accounted the best for Comedy and Tragedy among the Latines, so *Shakespeare* among y^e^ English is the most excellent in both kinds for the stage; for Comedy, witness his *Gētlemē of Verona*, his *Errors*, his *Love labors lost*, his *Love*

Dates of composition: external evidence.

labours wonne, his *Midsummers night dreame*, & his *Merchant of Venice:* for Tragedy, his *Richard the 2*, *Richard the 3*, *Henry the 4*, *King John*, *Titus Andronicus*, and his *Romeo* and *Iuliet*." Such references as these give a definite year, later than which the plays referred to could not have been written. With a starting point thus settled, it is often possible to work backward and fix definitely the date of composition.

Dates of composition: internal evidence.

Internal evidence, though seldom as exact as external, and therefore more difficult to interpret, is much more abundant. It may be nothing more than a reference in the mouth of an actor to events or books the dates of which are known, such as the words in the Prologue to "Henry V" that refer to the expedition of the Earl of Essex to Ireland in 1599. More often it deals with considerations of the metre, language, and form of the work itself. By studying such matters as classical allusions, the use of Latin words, kinds of figures of speech, puns, variations of verse and prose, and many other changing peculiarities of the poet's method, scholars have been able to trace the development of Shakespeare as a writer, and thus assign many of his plays to their probable year on no other evidence than their style. For instance, the date of "Julius Caesar" is generally agreed to be not earlier than 1601 from the poet's use of the word "eternal" in the phrase "the eternal devil." As late as 1600 Shakespeare was using "infernal" in such expressions, but after that year he began to use "eternal," owing probably to the increasing objection among Puritans of London to the use of profanity on the stage. Even such a simple matter as the number of rhyming lines in a play may help to

place it approximately. In "Love's Labour's Lost," the earliest of the comedies, there are 1028 rhymes; whereas in "The Winter's Tale" and "The Tempest," written twenty years later, there are none and two respectively. It is therefore safe to assume that as Shakespeare's style developed he used rhyme less and less, so that tragedies with but few rhyming lines, such as "Antony and Cleopatra" and "Coriolanus," may be assigned, if on no other ground, to the later years of his life. Such matters of structure and style are by no means always certain. They are delicate to handle and require sound judgment and long experience. Yet it is by this sort of internal evidence, rather than by external facts, that the chronology of the plays has been determined.

Probable dates of the plays.

The following table gives the result of research and comparison, of proof and conjecture, on the part of Shakespearean scholars. There still remain, of course, many differences of opinion; some of the dates are less certain than others; a few are almost entirely the result of guesswork. Yet when we consider the meagre data upon which students have built their conclusions, their lack of agreement seems remarkably slight and insignificant.

Plays printed before 1623.

Of the thirty-seven plays in the following table, the sixteen which appeared in Quarto editions during the poet's life were "Titus Andronicus," 1594; "Richard II," "Richard III," and "Romeo and Juliet," 1597; "1 Henry IV" and "Love's Labour's Lost," 1598; "The Merchant of Venice," "Henry V," "Much Ado About Nothing," "2 Henry IV," and "A Midsummer Night's Dream," 1600; "The Merry Wives of Windsor," 1602; "Hamlet,"

CHRONOLOGICAL TABLE OF SHAKESPEARE'S PLAYS AND POEMS

Period	Year	Poems	Comedies	Histories	Tragedies
I	1590		Love's Labour's Lost	1 Henry VI	
	1591		Comedy of Errors	2 Henry VI; 3 Henry VI	
	1592		Two Gentlemen of Verona	Richard III	Romeo and Juliet
	1593	Venus and Adonis		King John	Titus Andronicus
II	1594	Lucrece	A Midsummer Night's Dream		
	1595		Taming of the Shrew	Richard II	
	1596		Merchant of Venice		
	1597		Merry Wives of Windsor	1 Henry IV	
	1598		Much Ado About Nothing	2 Henry IV	
	1599	Passionate Pilgrim?	As You Like It	Henry V	
	1600		Twelfth Night		

	1601	Phoenix and the Turtle?	Troilus and Cressida		Julius Caesar
	1602		All's Well that Ends Well		Hamlet
	1603		Measure for Measure		
	1604				Othello
III	1605				King Lear
	1606				Macbeth
	1607				Timon of Athens
	1608	A Lover's Complaint;	Pericles		Antony and Cleopatra
	1609	Sonnets (Printed)			Coriolanus
	1610		Cymbeline		
IV	1611		Winter's Tale; Tempest		
	1612			Henry VIII	

1603; "King Lear," 1608; "Troilus and Cressida," and "Pericles," 1609. In addition to these, a Quarto of "Othello" was printed in 1622. The other twenty plays were not published, so far as we know, until 1623, when Heminge and Condell included them in the First Folio.

Periods of Shakespeare's development.

The periods shown in the table are, of course, wholly artificial. Shakespeare himself had no such division of his works in mind, and it is dangerous for us to-day to press very far the suggestion of clearly defined compartments for the plays. The development of the dramatist, like that of any artist, was gradual. Changes in style, in method, in views of life took place not in a single year, but were the result of slowly expanding power and growth of character. In that growth there were no sudden breaks or unaccountable transformations. The mind that created "Hamlet" in 1602 was the same mind that created "Twelfth Night" in 1600, no matter how black the line that separates them into two different periods. Yet a glance at the divisions in the table reveals two or three interesting facts.

The years of experiment, 1590–1593.

When Shakespeare has gained a foothold in the London theatres he first turns his hand to old plays, touching them up, remodelling, and improving. This is his natural work as an apprentice playwright. As he gains confidence and strikes out for himself, he experiments with all the forms of playwriting that then are known. Thus in "Love's Labour's Lost" we find one of the very few works the plot of which is his own invention; in "The Comedy of Errors" and "The Two Gentlemen of Verona" he imitates the Latin comedies of Plautus; in "Richard III" and "King John"

he attempts historical tragedy, and in "Romeo and Juliet" he gives us tragedy, full of romance and passion, drawn from Italy whence so many of his stories of later years are to come. The four years from 1590 to 1593 are evidently years of feeling about, testing himself, and experimenting. Naturally he writes with great rapidity: he is full of enthusiasm and the impetuous rush of youth. All that he does shows signs of a beginner and an unsettled purpose. We therefore do not expect to find highly finished work. As a matter of fact, with the exception of "Romeo and Juliet" and "Richard III," none of the plays of this early period are acted on the stage to-day or often read.

The poems.

It is now that Shakespeare writes his two long story poems, — "Venus and Adonis" in 1593 and "Lucrece" in 1594. In them he retells classical legends taken chiefly from the Roman poet Ovid. Their elaborate and florid language reminds us of similar narrative poems of the period. In their spirit and style they resemble the early plays, but in one important respect they differ: they are published with their author's name on the title-page. Unlike the Quartos of the dramas, Shakespeare prepares these poems for the press. Their popularity surpasses even that of the comedies. Seven editions of "Venus and Adonis" are issued between 1593 and 1602, and five of "Lucrece" between 1594 and 1616. Among the reading public of his day he becomes more widely known by them than by his work for the stage. He is now, in the eyes of the learned world, an author and creator of real literature.

By 1594 the years of apprenticeship are over; Shakespeare has found where his powers lie. He is still young

and ardent; the sadder and more serious things of life have not yet come to him; he sympathizes with the demands of the London populace to be amused. The results are the last of the histories and seven years of comedies, — the fullest, and we may well believe, the happiest time of his life as a dramatist. His power of expression, his skill in constructing a play, — above all, his keen insight into human nature, — develop with astonishing rapidity, until he is the favorite playwright of his day. In wit and enthusiasm, in pure poetry and "gusto," in creation of interesting and delightful character, the plays from "A Midsummer Night's Dream" to "Twelfth Night" stand unmatched. Not one of them has faded after three hundred years: they still are acted and read with profit and pleasure. Together they form "the rich period of unsurpassable comedy."

The great comedies, 1594-1600.

But youth and rollicking fun, high spirits and unbroken happiness, do not last. With the end of the century comes a turning-point in Shakespeare's life. Perhaps it is personal grief and suffering; possibly it is poor health and for the first time the thought that his own death may not be far away; possibly it is disappointment in his friends or his ambitions; or it may be simply a deeper wisdom coming with maturer years that now begins to make him think more and more of the greater and more serious things of life. The passions, the temptations, the moral struggles of mankind now absorb his interest. Naturally, comedy and history are inadequate for the expression of these deeper thoughts and emotions. With "Julius Caesar" begin the great tragedies, that "series of spectacles of the pity and terror

The great tragedies, 1601-1609.

of human suffering and human sin without parallel in the modern world."[1] Even the three comedies of these years are comedies only in name. Throughout them there is the atmosphere of suffering and sin. Their theme and spirit are more in keeping with "Hamlet" and "King Lear" than with the merrymaking and joyous fun of "As You Like It" and "A Midsummer Night's Dream." Thus every play of this period has a tragic motive, for during its nine years the mind and heart of the poet are concerned with the saddest and deepest things of human life.

The sonnets.

In 1609, toward the close of this period of tragedy, Shakespeare prints his volume of sonnets, one hundred and fifty-four in number. Some of them must have been written much earlier. Their style and youthful spirit show that; but besides, as early as 1598, Francis Meres spoke of Shakespeare's "sugred Sonnets among his private friends." Yet many of them show such power, such masterful handling of profound thought, such noble poetic form, that they seem to come from the years that produced "Hamlet" and "Othello." Probably the poet has been writing them off and on ever since he came to London, and now in 1609 he puts them at last into book form. It is well that he does so; for to-day every one who enjoys poetry reads them with delight. Unlike "Venus and Adonis" and "Lucrece" they do not fade; they are among the most perfect sonnets in our language, and they contain some of the finest lines that ever came from Shakespeare's pen. Here are two of the most admired:

[1] "The Facts about Shakespeare," Neilson and Thorndike. The Macmillan Company, 1915.

29.

When, in disgrace with fortune and men's eyes,
I all alone beweep my outcast state
And trouble deaf heaven with my bootless cries
And look upon myself and curse my fate,
Wishing me like to one more rich in hope,
Featured like him, like him with friends possess'd,
Desiring this man's art and that man's scope,
With what I most enjoy contented least;
Yet in these thoughts myself almost despising,
Haply I think on thee, and then my state,
Like to the lark at break of day arising
From sullen earth, sings hymns at heaven's gate;
For thy sweet love remember'd such wealth brings
That then I scorn to change my state with kings.

116.

Let me not to the marriage of true minds
Admit impediments. Love is not love
Which alters when it alteration finds,
Or bends with the remover to remove:
O, no! it is an ever-fixèd mark
That looks on tempests and is never shaken;
It is the star to every wandering bark,
Whose worth's unknown, although his height be taken;
Love's not Time's fool, though rosy lips and cheeks
Within his bending sickle's compass come;
Love alters not with his brief hours and weeks,
But bears it out even to the edge of doom.
If this be error and upon me proved,
I never writ, nor no man ever loved.

The storm and stress of tragedy, however, does not continue to the end. In the last years Shakespeare turns

away from the bitterness and sorrow of life, and leaves us as his final message three romantic comedies of delightful charm. The calm and quiet humor of these plays is very different from the boisterous farce of "The Merry Wives of Windsor" and the buffoonery of the clowns in the earlier dramas; but their beauty and sweetness and idealism make a happy and fitting close to the poet's work. In "Henry VIII," which shows brilliant flashes of his genius, and in "The Two Noble Kinsmen," which is not generally included among his plays, he writes in collaboration with John Fletcher, or with some other of the younger dramatists of these later years. He has made his fortune; he knows that his work is done; he is looking fondly toward his Stratford home, and so he turns over his place to other men.

The later comedies, 1610–1612.

First, — imitating, feeling his way, experimenting, rapidly and eagerly trying everything about him; then seven full years of whole-souled joy of living, enthusiasm, laughter, and fun; then deeper emotions and profound thought upon the saddest and most serious things of life; then a happier time of calm reflection and repose, followed by retirement from active work in London to the peaceful village home on the Avon; then, after four quiet years, the end. Thus, in a way, we begin to understand the development of Shakespeare's mind and character by a study of the years in which he wrote his plays and poems.

Summary.

SHAKESPEARE'S POPULARITY IN HIS OWN DAY

There somehow exists a quite general feeling that Shakespeare's genius was not properly appreciated in his own time; that dramatists, now ranked far below him, were more popular with audiences in the days of Queen Elizabeth and King James I. Whether this notion comes from the scarcity of facts which we have concerning the poet's life, it is hard to say. Certainly such a belief must be ranked among the most unfortunate of popular errors. There is ample evidence to show that he was not only popular with uneducated London tradesmen and apprentices who thronged the pit of the Globe, but in the best critical judgment of the day he was considered the first of poets and dramatists. "Throughout his lifetime," says Sidney Lee, "and for a generation afterwards, his plays drew crowds to pit, boxes, and gallery alike. It is true that he was one of a number of popular dramatists, many of whom had rare gifts, and all of whom glowed with a spark of genuine literary fire. But Shakespeare was the sun in the firmament: when his light shone, the fires of all contemporaries paled in the playgoer's eye."[1]

Shakespeare widely appreciated in his own lifetime.

Many bits of evidence have come down to us that show how high a place in people's hearts the plays of Shakespeare held in their author's lifetime. For instance, when he had been in London but ten years he was summoned by Queen Elizabeth to play before her and the court at Greenwich in the

Evidences of his popularity.

[1] Sidney Lee: "Shakespeare and the Elizabethan Playgoer."

Christmas holidays. The favor which King James showed his tragedies is well known. "Hamlet" was acted several times in the first year of its production, both in London and at Oxford and Cambridge. Four editions were printed in eight years,—an unusual demand for those times. Moreover, the name of Shakespeare appears in the works of contemporary authors more than that of any other dramatist, and almost invariably it is coupled with praise and admiration. He is the "mellifluous" and "honey-tongued" poet. One sets him above Plautus and Seneca; another prefers him to Chaucer, Gower, and Spenser; another declares that "he puts them all down, ay, and Ben Jonson, too." In the preface of the first complete edition of his plays, published seven years after his death, the compilers, who were his fellow-actors and friends, wrote of him that he was one "who as he was a happie imitator of Nature, was a most gentle expresser of it. His mind and hand went together; and what he thought, he uttered with that easinesse that wee have scarse received from him a blot in his papers. But it is not our province, who onely gather his works and give them you, to praise him. It is yours that reade him. And there we hope, to your divers capacities, you will finde enough both to draw and hold you; for his wit can no more lie hid than it could be lost. Reade him, therefore; and againe and againe; and if then you doe not like him, surely you are in some manifest danger not to understand him."

Ben Jonson's praise of Shakespeare.

A part of the introductory material of this First Folio edition of the plays consists of poems of praise contributed by the poet's admirers. Among the most famous are the noble lines

of Ben Jonson, scholar, poet, and dramatist. Here are the words of a thoughtful critic who knew the theatre from the stage and from the audience, — a man who had been associated with Shakespeare throughout his London career and who understood, better than any other, his place in the hearts of English people.

TO THE MEMORY OF MY BELOVED MASTER WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE AND WHAT HE HATH LEFT US

To draw no envy, Shakespeare, on thy name,
Am I thus ample to thy book and fame;
While I confess thy writings to be such,
As neither Man nor Muse can praise too much.

* * * * * * * *

Soul of the age!
The applause, delight, the wonder of our stage!
My SHAKESPEARE, rise! I will not lodge thee by
Chaucer, or Spenser, or bid Beaumont lie
A little further to make thee a room:
Thou art a monument without a tomb,
And art alive still while thy book doth live,
And we have wits to read, and praise to give.
That I not mix thee so my brain excuses, —
I mean with great, but disproportioned Muses;
For if I thought my judgment were of years,
I should commit thee surely with thy peers,
And tell how far thou didst our Lyly outshine,
Or sporting Kyd, or Marlowe's mighty line.
And though thou hadst small Latin and less Greek
From thence to honour thee I would not seek

For names, but call forth thund'ring Æschylus,
Euripides and Sophocles to us,
Pacuvius, Accius, him of Cordova dead,
To life again to hear thy buskin tread,
And shake a stage; or when thy socks were on,
Leave thee alone for a comparison
Of all that insolent Greece or haughty Rome
Sent forth, or since did from their ashes come.
Triumph, my Britain, thou hast one to show,
To whom all scenes of Europe homage owe.
He was not of an age, but for all time!
And all the Muses still were in their prime,
When, like Apollo, he came forth to warm
Our ears, or like a Mercury to charm!
Nature herself was proud of his designs,
And joyed to wear the dressing of his lines,
Which were so richly spun, and woven so fit,
As, since, she will vouchsafe no other wit.
The merry Greek, tart Aristophanes,
Neat Terence, witty Plautus, now not please;
But antiquated and deserted lie,
As they were not of Nature's family.
Yet must I not give Nature all; thy Art,
My gentle Shakespeare, must enjoy a part.
For though the poet's matter nature be,
His art doth give the fashion; and that he
Who casts to write a living line, must sweat
(Such as thine are) and strike the second heat
Upon the Muses' anvil, turn the same,
And himself with it, that he thinks to frame;
Or for the laurel he may gain to scorn;
For a good poet's made, as well as born.

And such wert thou! Look how the father's face
Lives in his issue, even so the race
Of Shakespeare's mind and manners brightly shines
In his well turnèd and true filèd lines,
In each of which he seems to shake a lance,
As brandished at the eyes of ignorance.
Sweet Swan of Avon! what a sight it were
To see thee in our waters yet appear,
And make those flights upon the banks of Thames,
That so did take Eliza and our James!
But stay, I see thee in the hemisphere
Advanced, and made a constellation there!
Shine forth, thou Star of Poets, and with rage
Or influence chide or cheer the drooping stage,
Which, since thy flight from hence, hath mourned like night,
And despairs day but for thy volume's light.

Even without these lines and numerous other bits of unqualified praise from contemporary pens, the fact that the plays were financially successful, and that from them their author made for those times a small fortune, shows us that Shakespeare was truly appreciated by all sorts of people in his own day. Before his death he had taken the place which he now holds, — that of the foremost of English poets and dramatists.

SHAKESPEARE'S FAME SINCE HIS DEATH

During the three hundred years since Shakespeare's death the popularity of his plays on the stage has naturally varied somewhat with the changing taste of the times. Toward the end of his life a decline in the drama had begun, so that the generation which followed was more pleased by the coarse blood-and-thunder tragedies of Webster, Ford, and Massinger than by the more profound and more artistic work of Shakespeare. Certain ones of the plays that very early ceased to be popular on the stage have never since come into favor. Most of the histories, two or three of the earliest comedies, "All's Well That Ends Well," "Measure for Measure," "Pericles," "Timon of Athens," "Troilus and Cressida," and "Coriolanus" have seldom been acted since they were first produced. The subjects of some of these are not suitable to present in a modern theatre; in others, as in the histories, there is not enough action or dialogue to satisfy an audience to-day. Yet these make but a small portion of the poet's work. With the exception of the twenty years, 1640–1660, when all theatres in England were closed under the censorship of Cromwell's Puritan Government, there never has been an age that has not had the opportunity to see its foremost actors in the greater comedies and tragedies that came from Shakespeare's pen.

Shakespeare on the stage since 1616.

During the reign of Charles II, in the period known as the Restoration, and for the forty years that followed, literary taste was at its lowest mark. Naturally Shakespeare suffered at a time when the coarse and artificial

plays of Wycherley, Vanbrugh, and Farquhar fascinated both the nobility and the common people of London. His dramas, to be sure, were still presented on the stage, but they were generally worked over, or even rewritten, to suit the strange fancies of the age. With music, new scenes, and new characters they were mutilated almost beyond recognition. From one point of view they were spoiled; yet it is significant that even to the theatre-goers of 1680 they still had enough vitality and imaginative power to be made the foundation of popular and successful entertainments. Dryden, the chief poet of the time, admired the genius of their author, and wrote prefaces for them in their renovated form. Betterton, the greatest actor of the age, was regarded at his best as the Prince in "Hamlet," a part which he played on many occasions, and always to enthusiastic houses. Samuel Pepys, who kept a remarkable diary between 1661 and 1669, records in his journal three hundred and fifty-one visits to the London theatres during these eight years. On forty-one of these occasions he saw plays by Shakespeare, or plays based upon them. Though Pepys was entirely unable to appreciate the poetry and all the finer qualities of what he heard, — he speaks in especially slighting terms of the comedies, — still it is interesting to know that he had even the opportunity, in eight short years, to witness fourteen different works of the great Elizabethan dramatist. This, too, in England's darkest age of literary appreciation!

The feeling for Shakespeare during the Restoration, 1660–1740.

The middle of the eighteenth century saw a new and genuine enthusiasm for Shakespeare. Scholars began to study his life and his work. New editions were published,

with notes and comment. The plays were revived on the stage in their original and true form. A great interest in all that he had said and thought was born, — an interest which grew through the years that followed, and still is growing. The foremost actors of all times have turned to him for their most ambitious work, and the crowning of their professional achievement. Perhaps the greatest of them all was David Garrick. "From his first triumph in Richard III, in 1741, to his farewell performance of Lear in 1776, he won a series of signal successes in both tragedy and comedy, in Hamlet, Lear, Macbeth, Richard III, Falconbridge, Romeo, Hotspur, Iago, Leontes, Posthumus, Benedick, and Antony. Garrick's services to Shakespeare extended beyond the parts which he impersonated. He revived many plays, and though he garbled the texts freely, yet in comparison with earlier practice he really had some right to boast that he had restored the text of Shakespeare to the stage. Further, his example led to an increased popularity of Shakespeare in the theatre and afforded new incentives for other actors. Mrs. Clive, Mrs. Cibber, and Mrs. Pritchard were among the women who acted with Garrick. Macklin, by his revival of Shylock as a tragic character, Henderson, by his impersonation of Falstaff, and John Palmer in secondary characters, as Iago, Mercutio, Touchstone, and Sir Tobey, were his contemporaries most famous in their day."[1] After Garrick came Mrs. Kemble, Edmund Kean, Mrs. Siddons, Macready, and Booth, — names remembered to-day chiefly in connection with the Shakespearean rôles which they nobly played.

The great actors in Shakespeare's plays.

[1] Neilson and Thorndike: "The Facts about Shakespeare," page 174.

Conditions have not changed in our own time. The greatest actors of our own generation, Sir Henry Irving, Ellen Terry, Helena Modjeska, Ada Rehan, Forbes Robertson, Beerbohm Tree, Julia Marlowe, and Edward Sothern, have been seen at their best in the comedies and tragedies of Shakespeare. Even in the twentieth century, with musical comedies, vaudeville, and moving-pictures to contend with, his plays are presented in greater number than are the plays of any other man who has ever lived. Nor are they revived merely for the sake of sentiment. They draw large audiences of all sorts of people. They still pay as purely business undertakings. "The Merchant of Venice," "Julius Caesar," "Hamlet," "Macbeth," "Twelfth Night," "As You Like It," "A Midsummer Night's Dream," "Romeo and Juliet," "The Taming of the Shrew," and "The Merry Wives of Windsor" still earn money for actors and theatre-managers as they did three centuries ago. What is far more important, they still give pleasure and amusement, they still stir laughter and tears and awaken the imagination as they did at the Globe in London in the lifetime of their creator.

Shakespeare on the stage to-day.

Shakespeare, we know, wrote his plays to be acted: to him they were distinctly stage productions to be seen and heard at the theatre. So little did he think of their being read that he apparently had no concern about them in their book form. To-day, on the contrary, though they still are presented on the stage, it is in school and college classrooms, in libraries, and in homes that they are chiefly known. New editions are constantly appearing. Plays and novels that were popular twenty years

Shakespeare's plays read, as well as acted.

ago are out of print and difficult to find; the works of Shakespeare, in a dozen different forms, are in every book-store of England and America. Quite apart from their acting qualities, they have come to be regarded as the highest type of literature in our language.

This is not the place to give an extensive criticism of Shakespeare's works, nor a full analysis of the reasons why the world regards them so highly apart from their value as stage performances. It will be enough to remind the student that in nothing that has ever been written do we find a clearer or more faithful portrayal of all the varying moods and emotions of human nature. The characters which Shakespeare has created live in our minds both as individuals and as types of the ideal. He strips away the petty things from life and shows us the eternal elements underneath. He has that wonderful and rare quality called universality; for he expresses the thoughts and feelings of us all, — the things which we know to be great and true. Somewhere in his plays everyone finds himself, and the discovery, though he may not realize it at the time, makes a lasting impression. For Shakespeare is the supreme teacher: he suggests, but does not preach, the art of living. Other men have done all this. But Shakespeare has left us his wisdom and his interpretation of life in a more beautiful and stately diction, in phrasing more apt and pleasing, in poetry of greater imaginative power, than has ever come from the mind of man.

Why Shakespeare lives.

More books have been written about Shakespeare than about any other person who ever lived.[1] This is not surpris-

[1] For titles of those books on Shakespeare most interesting to students and teachers, see page 259.

ing when we consider that the interest in his plays, which has existed now for three centuries, is world-wide, and when we remember that the language in which he wrote often needs explanation and comment to make it perfectly clear to the average reader to-day. Almost every English and American poet of note has left a tribute to the greatest of all poets. Perhaps the best known are Milton's famous Epitaph, printed on page viii of this volume, and Ben Jonson's lines contributed to the First Folio in 1623, which are given on page 216. Here are a few other short poems, or selections from poems, which give honor and praise to those characteristics that have made Shakespeare the inspiration and the guiding-star of poets since Elizabethan times.

JAMES THOMSON

FOR lofty sense,
Creative fancy, and inspection keen
Through the deep windings of the human heart,
Is not wild Shakespeare thine and Nature's boast?

Summer — 1727.

WILLIAM COLLINS

THE temper of our isle, though cold, is clear;
And such our genius, noble though severe.
Our Shakespeare scorn'd the trifling rules of art,
But knew to conquer and surprise the heart!
In magic chains the captive thought to bind,
And fathom all the depths of human kind!

On our Late Taste in Music — 1747.

THOMAS GRAY

FAR from the sun and summer gale
In thy green lap was Nature's Darling laid,
What time, where lucid Avon stray'd,
To him the mighty mother did unveil
Her awful face: the dauntless child
Stretch'd forth his little arms and smiled.
"This pencil take (she said), whose colours clear
Richly paint the vernal year:
Thine too these golden keys, immortal boy!
This can unlock the gates of joy;
Of horror that, and thrilling fears,
Or ope the sacred source of sympathetic tears."

The Progress of Poesy — 1757.

HENRY ALFORD

WE stood upon the tomb of him whose praise,
Time, nor oblivious thrift, nor envy chill,
Nor war, nor ocean with her severing space,
Shall hinder from the peopled world to fill;
And thus, in fulness of our heart, we cried:
God's works are wonderful — the circling sky,
The rivers that with noiseless footing glide,
Man's firm-built strength, and woman's liquid eye;
But the high spirit that sleepeth here below,
More than all beautiful and stately things,
Glory to God the mighty Maker brings;
To whom alone 'twas given the bounds to know
Of human action, and the secret springs
Whence the deep streams of joy and sorrow flow.

Stratford-upon-Avon — 1837.

ELIZABETH BARRETT BROWNING

THERE Shakespeare, on whose forehead climb
The crowns o' the world: O eyes sublime
With tears and laughter for all time!

A Vision of Poets—1844.

LEIGH HUNT

. . . HUMANITY'S divinest son,
That sprightliest, gravest, wisest, kindest one . . .

Thoughts of the Avon—1844.

ROBERT BROWNING

—I DECLARE our Poet, him
Whose insight makes all others dim:
A thousand Poets pried at life,
And only one amid the strife
Rose to be Shakespeare.

Christmas Eve and Easter Day—1850.

HARTLEY COLERIDGE

GREAT poet, 'twas thy art
To know thyself, and in thyself to be
Whate'er love, hate, ambition, destiny,
Or the firm, fatal purpose of the heart,
Can make of Man. Yet thou wert still the same,
Serene of thought, unhurt by thy own flame.

To Shakespeare—1851.

WILLIAM WETMORE STORY

. . . SHAKESPEARE, whose strong soul could climb
Steeps of sheer terror, sound the ocean grand
Of Passion's deeps, or over Fancy's strand
Trip with his fairies, keeping step and time.
His, too, the power to laugh out full and clear,
With unembittered joyance, and to move
Along the silent, shadowy paths of love
As tenderly as Dante, whose austere,
Stern spirit through the worlds below, above,
Unsmiling strode, to tell their tidings here.

The Mighty Makers, II — 1851

MATTHEW ARNOLD

OTHERS abide our question. Thou art free.
We ask and ask — thou smilest and art still,
Out-topping knowledge. For the loftiest hill,
Who to the stars uncrowns his majesty,
Planting his steadfast footsteps in the sea,
Making the heaven of heavens his dwelling-place,
Spares but the cloudy border of his base
To the foil'd searching of mortality;

And thou, who didst the stars and sunbeams know,
Self-school'd, self-scann'd, self-honour'd, self-secure
Didst tread on earth unguess'd at. — Better so!

All pains the immortal spirit must endure,
All weakness which impairs, all griefs which bow,
Find their sole speech in that victorious brow.

Shakespeare — 1867

THE THEATRE OF SHAKESPEARE'S DAY

When Shakespeare left Stratford and went to London, theatres were in their infancy. The first one had been built in 1576, when he was a lad of twelve, and on his arrival in the city there were but three small wooden structures devoted to the production of plays. Enthusiasm for the drama, however, was aglow. With the sanction of Queen Elizabeth, herself a lover of pageants and revels, and under the patronage of the powerful Earls of Leicester, Southampton, and Rutland, the popular demand for this form of amusement grew with amazing rapidity. Theatres shot up one after another until in 1633 there were at least nineteen in London, "a number," says Brandes, "which no modern town of 300,000 inhabitants can equal." Poets, courtiers, scholars, — everyone who could write, — turned to the making of plays. The art which Shakespeare found in its crude and humble beginnings, in the short period of his active life, that is, between 1585 and 1610, developed through every stage to its highest form, so that never in the three hundred years that have since elapsed has the drama of the Elizabethan days been surpassed. In this development Shakespeare was "a pioneer — almost the creator or first designer — as well as the practised workman in unmatched perfection."[1]

Popularity of the first theatres.

Though the first theatre in England was not erected until Shakespeare was twelve years old, long before his time there had been many different kinds of simple plays. The instinct to act out a story had existed from the child-

[1] Sidney Lee: "Shakespeare and the Elizabethan Playgoer."

hood of the race. With the earliest telling of legends and folktales by minstrels and bards there had often been occasion for dramatic recital, dialogue, and action. For centuries, too, there had been the solemn mysteries and quaint old moralities. Mummers and bands of strolling players had wandered over Europe throughout the Middle Ages. The drama, therefore, which flowered in the last half of the sixteenth century, was not a new and sudden birth, but rather came as the natural outgrowth of centuries of crude and humble plays. In the beginning these had been closely connected with the service of the church; in fact, they had been a means of religious instruction rather than a form of amusement. To understand this more clearly, let us compare their origin with that of the Greek drama in earlier ages still.

Plays before theatres were built.

Many, many centuries before Shakespeare was born, — five or six hundred years B.C., — the God Dionysus, or Bacchus, was worshipped in Greece at country festivals by boisterous groups of men who chanted and marched and exchanged bantering jests as they danced about the altar and acted out legends connected with the god. These actors, who represented the satyr followers of Dionysus, generally were clad in goatskins, whence we have our word "tragedy," from the Greek *tragos*, a goat, and *tragodia*, a goat-song. From these simple beginnings sprang the drama of Greece, which produced Æschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides. The religious element persisted in ancient times much longer than in England, for the plays of the Greek dramatists who correspond to Shakespeare were still a form of worship. In the center of the orchestra

The religious origin of the Greek drama.

stood the altar of Dionysus, about which the chorus moved in solemn procession, chanting and reciting; before the performance began there were sacrifices to the god, and the plays were given in the spring on the days of the Dionysian festival. Greek tragedy was therefore not merely an entertainment, but a serious religious function. Beginning as a popular form of Nature worship, it finally became a means of expression for the most serious and finest of Greek thought and wisdom. As it spread from Athens to other towns, little by little it ceased to be a religious affair, until at last, as it gradually lost its vitality and splendor, its relation to the worship of Dionysus entirely disappeared. In similar fashion, comedy (from *comos*, a band of revellers, and *odé*, a song) developed from the ruder, more rustic elements in the worship of the same god, though here, as we might expect, the religious element did not persist as long as it did in its greater and more serious cousin, tragedy.

English drama begins in the Church.

More than eighteen hundred years later, in England, we find the beginnings of the drama again closely related to worship. At a time when few of the common people could read, the priests in the churches found no method of teaching their congregations the stories of the Bible so effective as the use of objects and pictures which appealed to the eye. The effectiveness of their teaching was enormously increased when they added movement, action, and talk to their picture lessons. Indeed, it was but a step from the impressive and beautiful service of the Mass to a dramatic presentation, in simple form, of the most solemn scenes in religious history. "In this manner the people not only *heard* the story of the Adoration of the Magi and of the

Marriage in Cana, but *saw* the story in tableau. In course of time the persons in these tableaux spoke and moved, and then it was but a logical step to the representation dramatically, by the priests before the altar, of the striking or significant events in the life of Christ."[1]

Thus in the services of the church at Christmas, Good Friday, and Easter were laid the foundations of our modern drama. These earliest performances, which were called Mysteries, dealt wholly with Bible stories, from the Creation to the Day of Judgment, and with the life of Christ; but as they became more and more popular with the masses, a broader field of subjects was sought, and lives of saints were used for dramatic material in the Miracle Plays of a century later. Not only were the priests the authors of both these simple forms of drama, but with the choir boys they were also the actors. For many years these plays were given on Holy Days and Saints' Days, either at the altar in the church itself, or in the enclosure just outside its walls. Their object continued to be largely religious instruction. In the Miracle plays, however, there were opportunities for a good deal of grotesque amusement. Incidents in the lives of the saints were not always serious or spiritual. The Devil gradually became more or less of a comic character. As the performances grew less solemn and awe-inspiring, the attitude of the people toward them changed. No longer did they attend them to worship, but rather to see a show and be amused. Gradually, therefore, they became separated from the service of the church, until finally they were banished once for all from the sacred walls, and but a few years after they had been

The Mysteries and Miracle Plays.

[1] W. H. Mabie: "William Shakespeare: Poet, Dramatist, and Man."

given at the altar they were being denounced by the priests as base and wicked things. Indeed, the feeling that plays are devices and temptations of Satan, which still exists, may be traced to the time, four centuries ago, when the drama lost favor with the Church.

Trade-Guilds and the plays.

The Mysteries and Miracle Plays did not decline in popularity when they were abandoned by the various religious orders. On the contrary, with the greater freedom and larger opportunity which separation from the church gave them, they increased rapidly in the people's favor. They were now taken up by the trade-guilds which, by the fifteenth century, developed elaborate and systematic methods of presenting them. Often different groups of tradesmen, such as the weavers' guild or the goldsmiths' guild, would unite, each band or " company " presenting an act or scene in the play to be undertaken. Huge, two-story covered wagons, somewhat like our large moving-vans to-day, took the place of stage and property-rooms. The actors dressed in the enclosed part of the vehicle, and then mounted a ladder or some rough stairs to the top story, or roof, where they performed their parts. Announced by heralds, — sometimes even by proclamation of the Mayor, — these pageants, as they were called, were drawn through the town on holidays and occasions of special festival. In the course of its progress the moving-stage would stop several times, — at the corners of the principal streets, in a public square, often at the doors of a church or cathedral. Then the crowd which had been following in its wake gathered about it to witness again the drama of Adam and Eve and the Garden of Eden, of Noah, the flood and the ark, of Pilate and Herod, or one of the

numberless other stories with which they had been familiar from childhood.

Miracle Plays and Mysteries were followed by the Moralities in which abstract qualities such as Pleasure, Slander, Rage, Perseverance, and the Seven Deadly Sins took the place of characters from the Bible. This was a long stride forward. Now the field of subjects was greatly enlarged. Originality both in writing plays and in producing them was now first in demand. Opportunity had come at last for the creation of character, and for the use of everyday life on the stage. "Everyman," which has often been acted in our time, is a good example of what the Moralities at their best could be. Like the Miracle plays they were generally given by the guilds in marketplaces, enclosures of castles, and inn-yards where people could watch them from windows and balconies, as well as from the ground about the portable stage. Heavy, crude, and dull as these old plays now seem to us, they were intensely enjoyed by the populace of those far-away simpler times. From the eagerness and excitement with which they awaited their coming to town, or travelled long distances to see them, it is evident that a love of acting was inborn in the hearts of the people which sooner or later would develop a more finished and artistic drama.

The Moralities.

None of the performers in the Mysteries or Miracle Plays had been professional actors; but now with the Moralities came the opportunity for men to make a business of acting. As religious subjects gradually disappeared from the pageant stage, actors by profession came into existence. Wandering minstrels and story-tellers, mummers

Acting as a profession; companies of actors.

and strolling players, began to join together in troops for protection and companionship. "From the days of Henry VI onwards, members of the nobility began to entertain these companies of actors, and Henry VII and Henry VIII had their own private comedians. A 'Master of the Revels' was appointed to superintend musical and dramatic entertainments at court." A little later a statute of Parliament declared that "all actors who were not attached to the service of a nobleman should be treated as rogues and vagabonds, or in other words, might be whipped out of any town in which they appeared. This decree, of course, compelled all actors to enter the service of one great man or other, and we see that the aristocracy felt bound to protect their art. A large number of the first men in the kingdom, during Elizabeth's reign, had each his company of actors. The player received from the nobleman, whose 'servant' he was, a cloak bearing the arms of the family. On the other hand, he received no salary, but was simply paid for each performance given before his patron. We must thus conceive Shakespeare as bearing on his cloak the arms of Leicester, and afterwards of the Lord Chamberlain, until about his fortieth year. From 1604 onwards, when the company was promoted by James I to be His Majesty's Servants, it was the Royal arms that he wore."[1]

The first theatres in London.

For many years these companies of professional actors had no regular buildings in which to give their performances. Their plays were presented before their noble patrons in the great halls of their castles, and occasionally at court for the amusement of the king or queen. As late as Shake-

[1] Georg Brandes: "William Shakespeare," page 99.

speare's boyhood they were witnessed by the common people in the yards of taverns, in the open streets, or on village greens. If the actors played in London, either in the guild-halls or out of doors, they first had to obtain a license from the Lord Mayor for each performance, and then they were obliged to surrender half of their receipts to the city treasury. These trying conditions, with the growing popularity of the drama among all classes, finally led in 1576 to the erection of the first building for acting purposes. This was called the Theatre. The following year the Curtain was erected; in 1587, the Rose; in 1594, the Swan; and in 1599, the Globe. Once begun they shot up with wonderful rapidity. When Shakespeare arrived in the city there were but three playhouses; in 1611, when he retired to Stratford, there were probably ten or twelve.

The location of the first theatres.

In one sense London even then did not possess a theatre, for the early playhouses were not in the city at all. They were built on a tract of open land across the Thames, at the further end of London Bridge, outside the walls and well beyond the jurisdiction of the Mayor. The capital was then a town of small dimensions, barely a mile square, with a population of nearly 200,000 crowded together in houses which were constructed largely of wood. The streets were narrow, crooked, and muddy. Adequate means of fighting fire and disease did not exist. The Corporation was therefore strongly opposed to the erection of dangerous and inflammable structures upon the few vacant spaces within the walls. Moreover, among the Puritans, who were coming to be a large and influential body, opposition to the drama was growing more marked

and open; so that the companies of actors were obliged to put up their theatres well beyond the reach of the city's laws.

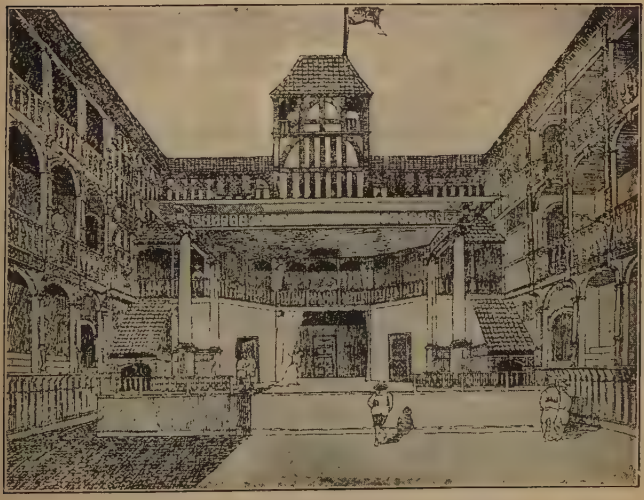
Let us now pay a visit to the Globe, to us the most interesting of all the theatres, for it is here that Shakespeare's company acts, and here many of his plays are first seen on the stage. We cross the Thames by London Bridge with its lines of crowded booths and shops and throngs of bustling tradesmen; or if it is fine weather we take a small boat and are rowed over the river to the southern shores. Here on the Bankside, in the part of London now called Southwark, beyond the end of the bridge, and in the open fields near the Bear Garden, stands a roundish, three-story wooden building, so high for its size that it looks more like a clumsy, squatty tower than a theatre. As we draw nearer we see that it is not exactly round after all, but is somewhat hexagonal in shape. The walls seem to slant a little inward, giving it the appearance of a huge thimble, or cocked hat, with six flattened sides instead of a circular surface. There are but few small windows and two low shabby entrances. The whole structure is so dingy and unattractive that we stand before it in wonder. Can this be the place where "Hamlet," "The Merchant of Venice," and "Julius Caesar" are put on the stage!

The Globe Theatre: its external appearance.

Our amazement on stepping inside is even greater. The first thing that astonishes us is the blue sky over our heads. The building has no roof except a narrow strip around the edge and a covering at the rear over the back part of the stage. The front of the stage and the whole center of the theatre is open to the air. Now we see how the in-

The Globe Theatre: the interior.

THE GLOBE THEATRE



INTERIOR OF AN ELIZABETHAN THEATRE

Godfrey's reconstruction of the Fortune Theatre

terior is lighted, though with the sunshine must often come rain and sleet and London fog. Looking up and out at the clouds floating by, we notice that a flag is flying from a short pole on the roof over the stage. This is most important, for it is announcing to the city across the river that this afternoon there is to be a play. It is bill-board, newspaper notice, and advertisement in one: and we may imagine the eagerness with which it is looked for among the theatre-loving populace of these later Elizabethan years. When the performance begins the flag will be lowered to proclaim to all that "the play is on."

Seating arrangements in the theatre: the pit.

Where, now, shall we sit? Before us on the ground level is a large open space, which corresponds to the orchestra circle on the floor of a modern play-house. But here there is only the flat bare earth, trodden down hard, with rushes and straw scattered over it. There is not a sign of a seat! This is the "yard," or, as it is sometimes called, "the pit," where, by paying a penny or two, London apprentices, sailors, laborers, and the mixed crowd from the streets may stand jostling together. Some of the more enterprising ones may possibly sit on boxes and stools which they bring into the building with them. Among these "groundlings" there will surely be bustling confusion, noisy wrangling, and plenty of danger from pickpockets; so we look about us to find a more comfortable place from which to watch the performance.

The balconies and boxes.

On three sides of us, and extending well around the stage, are three tiers of narrow balconies. In some places these are divided into compartments, or boxes. The prices here are higher, varying from a few pennies to half a crown, according to

the location. By putting our money into a box held out to us, — there are no tickets, — we are allowed to climb the crooked wooden stairs to one of these compartments. Here we find rough benches and chairs, and above all a little seclusion from the throng of men and boys below. Along the edge of the stage we observe that there are stools, but these places, elevated and facing the audience, seem rather conspicuous, and besides the prices are high. They will be taken by the young gallants and men of fashion of London, in brave and brilliant clothes, with light swords at their belts, wide ruffled collars about their necks, and gay plumes in their hats. It will be amusing to see them show off their fine apparel, and display their wit at the expense of the groundlings in the pit, and even of the actors themselves. We are safer, however, and much more comfortable here in the balcony among the more sober, quiet gentlemen of London, who with mechanics, tradesmen, nobles, and shop-keepers have come to see the play.

The stage.

The moment we entered the theatre we were impressed by the size of the stage. Looking down upon it from the balcony, it seems even larger and very near us. If it is like the stage of the Fortune it is square, as shown in the illustration facing page 236. Here in the Globe it is probably narrower at the front than at the back, tapering from the rear wall almost to a point. Whatever its shape, it is only a roughly-built, high platform, open on three sides, and extending halfway into the "yard." Though a low railing runs about its edge, there are no footlights, — all performances are in the afternoon by the light of day which streams down through the open top, — and strangest of all there is no curtain. At each

side of the rear we can see a door that leads to the "tiring-rooms," where the actors dress, and from which they make their entrances. These are the "green-rooms" and wings of our theatre to-day. Between the doors is a curtain that now before the play begins is drawn together. Later when it is pulled aside, — not *upward* as curtains usually are now, — we shall see a shallow recess or alcove which serves as a secondary, or inner stage. Over this extends a narrow balcony covered by a roof which is supported at the front corners by two columns that stand well out from the wall. Still higher up, over the inner stage, is a sort of tower, sometimes called the "hut," and from a pole on this the flag is flying which summons the London populace from across the Thames. Rushes are strewn over the floor; there are no drops or wings or walls of painted scenery. In its simplicity and bareness it reminds us of the rude stage of the strolling players. Indeed, the whole interior of the building seems to be but an adaptation of the tavern-yard and village-green.

Use of the main stage.

How, we wonder, can a play like "Julius Caesar" or "The Merchant of Venice" be staged on such a crude affair as this! What are the various parts of it for? Practically all acting is done, we shall see, on the front of the platform well out among the crowd in the pit, with the audience on three sides of the performers. All out-of-door scenes will be acted here, from a conversation in the streets of Venice or a dialogue in a garden, to a battle, a procession, or a banquet in the Forest of Arden. Here, too, with but the slightest alteration, or even with no change at all, interior scenes will be presented. With the "groundlings" crowded close up to its edges, and with young gallants

sitting on its sides, this outer stage comes close to the people. On it will be all the main action of the drama: the various arrangements at the rear are for supplementary purposes and certain important effects.

Uses of the inner stage.

The inner stage, or alcove beyond the curtain, is used in many ways. It may serve for any room somewhat removed from the scene of action, such as a passage-way or a study. It often is made to represent a cave, a shop, or a prison. Here Othello, in a frenzy of jealous passion, strangles Desdemona as she lies in bed; here probably the ghost of Caesar appears to Brutus in his tent on the plains of Philippi; here stand the three fateful caskets in the mansion at Belmont, as we see by Portia's words,

> "Go, *draw aside the curtains*, and discover
> The several caskets to this noble Prince."

Tableaux and scenes within scenes, such as the short play in "Hamlet" by which the prince "catches the conscience of the king," are acted in this recess. But the most important use is to give the effect of a change of scene. By drawing apart and closing the curtain, with a few simple changes of properties in this inner compartment, a different background is possible. By such a slight variation of setting at the rear, the platform in the pit is transformed, by the quick imagination of the spectators, from a field or a street to a castle hall or a wood. Thus, the whole stage becomes the Forest of Arden by the use of a little greenery in the distance. Similarly, a few trees and shrubs at the rear of the inner stage, when the curtain is thrown aside, will change the setting from the court-room in the fourth act of "The Merchant of Venice," to the

scene in the garden at Belmont which immediately follows.

The balcony over the inner stage serves an important purpose, too. With the windows, which are often just over the doors leading to the tiring-rooms, it gives the effect of an upper story in a house, of walls in a castle, a tower, or any elevated position. This is the place, of course, where Juliet comes to greet Romeo who is in the garden below. In "Julius Caesar" when Cassius says,

Uses of the balcony over the stage.

"Go Pindarus, *get higher on that hill;*

* * * * * *

And tell me what thou notest about the field,"

the soldier undoubtedly climbs to the balcony, for a moment later, looking abroad over the field of battle, he reports to Cassius what he sees from his elevation. Here Jessica appears when Lorenzo calls under Shylock's windows, "Ho! who's within?" and on this balcony she is standing when she throws down to her lover a box of her father's jewels. "Here, catch this casket; it is worth the pains," she says, and retires into the house, appearing below a moment later to run away with Lorenzo and his masquerading companions.

Besides these simple devices, if we look closely enough we shall see a trap-door, or perhaps two, in the platform. These are for the entrance of apparitions and demons. They correspond, in a way, to the balcony by giving the effect of a place lower than the stage level. Thus in the first scene of "The Tempest," which takes place in a storm at sea, the notion of a ship may be suggested to the audience by sailors

Other stage devices.

entering from the trap-door, as they might come up a hatchway to a deck. If it is a play with gods and goddesses and spirits, we may be startled to see them appear and disappear through the air. Evidently there is machinery of some sort in the hut over the balcony which can be used for lowering and raising deities and creatures that live above the earth. On each side of the stage is a flight of steps leading to the balcony. These are often covered, as plainly shown by Mr. Godfrey's reconstruction of the Fortune Theatre facing page 236. Here sit councils, senates, and princes with their courts. Macbeth uses them to give the impression of ascending to an upper chamber when he goes to kill the king, and down them he rushes to his wife after he has committed the fearful murder.

Scenery on the stage.

What astonishes us most, however, is the absence of scenery. To be sure, some slight attempt has been made to create scenic illusion. There are, perhaps, a few trees and boulders, a table, a chair or two, and pasteboard dishes of food. But there is little more. In the only drawing of the interior of an Elizabethan theatre that has been preserved, — a sketch of the Swan made in 1596, — the stage has absolutely no furniture except one plain bench on which one of the actors is sitting. Here before us in the Globe the walls may be covered with loose tapestries, black if the play is to be a tragedy, blue if a comedy; but it is quite possible that they are entirely bare. A placard on one of the pillars announces that the stage is now a street in Venice, now a courtroom, now the hall of a stately mansion. It may be that the Prologue, or even the actors themselves, will tell us at the opening of an act just where the scene is laid and what we are to imagine the platform to represent

In "Henry V," for instance, the Prologue at the beginning not only explains the setting of the play, but asks forgiveness of the audience for attempting to put on the stage armies and battles and the "vasty fields of France."

"But pardon, gentles all,
The flat unraiséd spirit that hath dared
On this unworthy scaffold to bring forth
So great an object. Can this cockpit hold
The vasty fields of France? or may we cram
Within *this wooden O* the very casques
That did affright the air at Agincourt?
O, pardon! since a crooked figure may
Attest in little place a million;
And let us, ciphers to this great accompt,
On your imaginary forces work.
Suppose within the girdle of these walls
Are now confined two mighty monarchies,
Whose high-upreaŕéd and abutting fronts
The perilous, narrow ocean parts asunder.
Piece out our imperfections with your thoughts;
Into a thousand parts divide one man,
And make imaginary puissance.
Think, when we talk of horses, that you see them
Printing their proud hoofs i' the receiving earth,
For 'tis your thoughts that now must deck our kings,
Carry them here and there, jumping o'er times,
Turning the accomplishment of many years
Into an hour-glass."

In "As You Like It" it is an actor who tells us at the opening of the second act that we are now to imagine the Forest of Arden before us. In the first sentence which

the banished Duke speaks, he says, "Are not *these woods* more free from peril than the envious court?" and a moment later, when Touchstone and the runaway maidens first enter the woods, Rosalind exclaims, "Well, this is the Forest of Arden!" A hint, a reference, a few simple contrivances, a placard or two, — these are enough. "Imaginary forces" are here in the audience keenly alive, and they will do the rest. By means of them, without the illusion of scenery, the bare wooden stage will become a ship, a garden, a palace, a London tavern. Whole armies will enter and retire by a single door. Battles will rage, royal processions pass in and out, graves will be dug, lovers will woo, — and all with hardly an important alteration of the setting. Lack of scenery does not limit the type of scenes that can be presented. On the contrary, it gives almost unlimited opportunities to the dramatist, for the spectators, in the force and freshness of their imagination, are children who willingly "play" that the stage is anything the author suggests. Their youthful enthusiasm, their simple tastes, above all their lack of knowledge of anything different, give them the enviable power of imagining the grandest, most beautiful, and most varied scenes on the same bare, unadorned boards. Apparently they are well satisfied with their stage; for it is not until nearly fifty years after Shakespeare's death that movable scenery is used in an English theatre.

The performance of a play.

It is now three o'clock and time for the performance to begin. Among the motley crowd of men and boys in the yard there is no longer room for another box or stool. They are evidently growing impatient and jostle together in noisy confusion. Suddenly three long blasts on a trumpet sound. The

mutterings in the pit subside, and all eyes turn toward the stage. First an actor, clothed in a black mantle and wearing a laurel wreath on his head, comes from behind the curtain and recites the prologue. From it we learn something of the story of the play to follow, and possibly a little about the scene of action. This is all very welcome, for we have no programs and the plot of the drama is unfamiliar. In a minute or two the Prologue retires and the actors of the first scene enter. We are soon impressed by the rapidity with which the play moves on. There is little stage "business"; though there may be some music between the acts, still there are no long waits; one scene follows another as quickly as the actors can make their exits and entrances. The whole play, therefore, does not last much over two hours. At the close there is an epilogue, spoken by one of the actors, after which the players kneel and join in a prayer for the queen. Then comes a final bit of amusement for the groundlings: the clown, or some other comic character of the company, sings a popular song, dances a brisk and boisterous jig, and the performance of the day is done.

During our novel experience this afternoon at the Globe, nothing has probably surprised us more than the elaborate and gorgeous costumes of the actors. At a time when so little attention is paid to scenery we naturally expect to find the dress of the players equally simple and plain. But we are mistaken. The costumes, to be sure, make little or no pretension to fit the period or place of action. Caesar appears in clothes such as are worn by a duke or an earl in 1601. "They are the ordinary dresses of various classes of the day, but they are often of rich material, and

Costumes of the actors.

in the height of current fashion. False hair and beards, crowns and sceptres, mitres and croziers, armour, helmets, shields, vizors, and weapons of war, hoods, bands, and cassocks, are relied on to indicate among the characters differences of rank or profession. The foreign observer, Thomas Platter of Basle, was impressed by the splendor of the actors' costumes. 'The players wear the most costly and beautiful dresses, for it is the custom in England, that when noblemen or knights die, they leave their finest clothes to their servants, who, since it would not be fitting for them to wear such splendid garments, sell them soon afterwards to the players for a small sum.'"[1] But no money is spared to secure the fitting garment for an important part. Indeed, it is quite probable that more is paid for a king's velvet robe or a prince's silken doublet than is given to the author for the play itself. Whether the elaborate costumes are appropriate or not, their general effect is pleasing, for they give variety and brilliant color to the bare and unattractive stage.

Female parts taken by boys.

If we are happily surprised by the costuming of the play, what shall we say of the actors who take the female parts! They are very evidently not women, or even girls, but boys whose voices have not changed, dressed, tricked out, and trained to appear as feminine as possible. It is considered unseemly for a woman to appear on a public stage, — indeed, the professional actress does not exist and will not be seen in an English theatre for nearly a century. Meanwhile plays are written with few female parts (remember "The Merchant of Venice," "Julius Caesar," and "Macbeth") and young boys are trained to take these

[1] Sidney Lee: "Shakespeare and the Modern Stage," page 41.

rôles. The theatregoers seem to enjoy the performance just as much as we do to-day with mature and accomplished actresses on the stage. Shakespeare and his fellow dramatists treated the situation with good grace or indifference. Thus in the epilogue of "As You Like It" Rosalind says to the audience, "*If I were a woman* I would kiss as many of you as had beards that pleased me." The jest, of course, consists in the fact that she is *not* a woman at all, but a stripling. In a more tragic vein Cleopatra, before she dies, complains that "the quick comedians . . . will stage us, . . . and I shall see some *squeaking Cleopatra boy my* greatness." It may be that the boys who take the women's parts this afternoon wear masks to make them seem less masculine, though how that can improve the situation it is difficult to understand. There is an amusing reference to this practice in "A Midsummer Night's Dream." When Flute, the bellows-mender, is assigned a part in the drama which the mechanics of Athens are rehearsing, he exclaims, "Nay, faith, let me not play a woman; I have a beard coming"; to which protest Quince replies, "That's all one: you shall play it *in a mask*, and you may speak as small as you will."

The audience at the Globe.

Though rapid action, brilliant costumes, and, above all, the force and beauty of the lines, may lead us to forget that the heroine is only a boy, it is more difficult to keep our attention from being distracted by the audience around us. It surprises us that there are so few women present. We notice, too, that many of those who have come wear a mask of silk or velvet over their faces. Evidently it is hardly the proper thing for a respectable woman to be seen in a public theatre. The people in the balconies are

fairly orderly, but below in the pit the crowd is restless, noisy, and at times even boisterous. Bricklayers, dock-laborers, apprentices, serving-men, and idlers stand in jostling confusion. There are no police and no laws that are enforced. Pickpockets ply an active trade. One, we see, has been caught and is bound to the railing at the edge of the stage where he is an object of coarse jests and ridicule. Refreshment-sellers push about in the throng with apples and sausages, nuts and ale. There is much eating and drinking and plenty of smoking. On the stage the gallants are a constant source of bother to the players. They interrupt the Prologue, criticise the dress of the hero, banter the heroine, and joke with the clown. Even here in the gallery we can hear their comments — far from flattering — upon a scene that does not please them; when a little later they applaud, their praises are just as vigorous. Once it seems as though the play is going to be brought to a standstill by a wrangling quarrel between one of these rakish gentlemen and a group of groundlings near the stage. Their attention, however, is taken by the entrance of the leading actor declaiming a stirring passage, and their differences are soon forgotten. It is, on the whole, a good-natured rough crowd of the common people, the lower and middle classes from the great city across the river, — more like the crowd one sees to-day at a circus or a professional ball-game than at a theatre of the highest type. They loudly cheer the clown's final song and dance, and then with laughter, shouting, and jesting they pour out of the yard and in a moment the building is empty. The play is over until to-morrow afternoon.

What a contrast it all has been to a play in a theatre of

the twentieth century! When we think of the uncomfortable benches, the flat bare earth of the pit, the lack of scenery, footlights, and drop curtains; when we hear the shrill voices of boys piping the women's parts, and see mist and rain falling on spectator's heads, we are inclined to pity the playgoer of Elizabethan times. Yet he needs no pity. To him the theatre of his day was sufficient. The drama enacted there was a source of intense and genuine pleasure. His keen enthusiasm; his fresh, youthful eagerness; above all, his highly imaginative power, — far greater than ours to-day, — gave him an ability to understand and enjoy the poetry and dramatic force of Shakespeare's works, which we, with all the improvements of our palatial theatres, cannot equal. Crude, simple, coarse as they now seem to us, we can look back only with admiration upon the Swan and the Curtain and the Globe; for in them "The Merchant of Venice," "As You Like It," "Julius Caesar," "Hamlet," and "Macbeth" were received with acclamations of joy and wonder. In them the genius of Shakespeare was recognized and given a place in the drama of England which now, after three centuries have passed, it holds in the theatres and in the literature of all the world.

Conclusions to be drawn.

ACTING SHAKESPEARE

[Suggestions to teachers and pupils as to the dramatization of scenes from the plays.]

No one will doubt that the best way to understand Shakespeare is to see him competently acted. Not all of us realize, however, the interest and value of acting him ourselves. The average schoolboy is likely to look upon any suggestion of a performance from any of the plays as a dubious proceeding, while the average teacher is inclined to lock up the great play-maker in the safe seclusion of the class-room.

Shakespeare in the class-room.

And yet how easily one can picture the amusement of Shakespeare himself if he were to look in upon a class of boys and girls seated at their desks busily engaged in hammering out meanings, "problems," and character-analyses. "Throw all this to the dogs!" he would cry. "I'll none of it!" And in five minutes he would have every one on his feet, book or no book, moving, speaking, declaiming, making all possible mistakes and "misinterpretations," but — living, acting, and turning a rattle of dry bones into something like the form and body intended in the play. In ten minutes more half the class would be seated again, but now as a rapt and attentive audience watching a real Shylock creeping towards a real Antonio in the crowded court-room, or a flesh and blood Hamlet walking with his friends on the lonely platform at Elsinore, or the rush of the conspirators towards the unsuspecting and defenseless Caesar. So the work would swing forward, haltingly, indeed, and

with many breaks and readjustments. But one can picture, at the end of the hour, the emergence of the class from the dead letter to the spirit that giveth life.

Something of this kind is within the power of every teacher of Shakespeare. The first point to be remembered is that the plays were originally written to be *acted*, not read; that, as a matter of fact, they were usually kept out of book form in order that people should not read them. The second point of importance is that there were very many boy actors in Shakespeare's day who acted Shakespeare's plays, and acted them well — as may easily be seen from the current criticism of the day. The chief difficulty in the way of class-room acting is perhaps (or is thought to be) the difficulty of the language. But here the difficulty is more imagined than real; many supposed obscurities will be solved by a reading aloud, and as for the rest, it will be found that they will clear of themselves with the progress of the acting.

The question of scenery (I am speaking now entirely of class-room acting) is not hard to deal with. If a platform be available, so much the better. If not, set apart the front third of the room for a stage; mark it off by a chalk line and let it be understood that this space is for the actors alone. It is surprising to see how eagerly young people throw themselves into this game of make-believe. A stick, a cloak, an old hat or two and a couple of chairs will turn out to be valuable properties when every one realizes that "the play's the thing" and that imagination must be used to piece out what is lacking. Shakespeare faced similar lacks. But he trusted to the imagination of his audiences and did not hesitate to suggest on

Scenery not difficult.

the bare stage of the Globe Theatre a precipice beetling over the sea, a lonely castle at midnight, a battlefield marched over by opposing armies, a sinking ship, a tavern, or a king's chamber "canopied with costly state." When we see the plays as acted on the stage to-day, with every artistic accompaniment that the mind can devise or the hand can execute, we are likely to forget the absolute simplicity of the conditions under which they were first produced. It is quite safe to trust young actors; they will not bother their heads about scenic effects. They will do better: they will supply them in their own thoughts and act accordingly. A boy of twelve, draped in an old curtain, will turn wearily from the blackboard that represents a window of the palace overlooking the sleeping city and, sinking into a class-room chair, will bow his head on his hands and begin:

> How many thousand of my poorest subjects
> Are at this hour asleep! O sleep, O gentle sleep,
> Nature's soft nurse, how have I frighted thee,
> That thou no more wilt weigh my eyelids down,
> And steep my senses in forgetfulness?

And he'll mean it, too, every word of it. It needs only a suggestion from the teacher — a word here and there — and the thing is done. As for the teacher, he must have a real love for the work, and an understanding heart, and there is not much limit to what he can do. If he has not love and understanding, he has no business to be teaching Shakespeare.

Some of the plays lend themselves better than others to class-room acting. Thus, it is probable that "The

Merchant of Venice," with its strongly marked characters and definite situations, is better adapted than most of Shakespeare's dramas to the minds of young people. The Trial Scene makes a delightful little play in itself. "Julius Caesar" offers two excellent opportunities for class-room work in the Murder Scene and the Mob Scene. The Mob, during Antony's speech, presents interesting possibilities. The "drowning out" of Antony's remarks, his efforts to make himself heard above the shouts of these turbulent citizens and his final winning over of the crowd, afford plenty of opportunity for vigorous acting.

Scenes adapted to acting.

In "Hamlet" there is nothing so readily to be seized upon by the young actors, yet the play contains several scenes which can be used very effectively. Thus in Act I we have Scene 1 marked by striking dialogue, with a touch of real horror when the Ghost appears. Scene 2, from line 159 to the end, is full of strong feeling. The two closing Scenes, while they contain some long speeches, are nevertheless worth careful study because of the changes in the mind of Hamlet — first controlled excitement, then horror, then the feverish, almost hysterical effort for self-control, then the blind reaching out after some plan of action, ending with the deep pathos of the last four lines. The various scenes which portray the madness of Hamlet are a little difficult — though not beyond the compass of a clever boy; the Graveyard Scene is grim comedy turning almost to tragedy; the conversation with Osric is amusing satire. The Duel Scene offers a problem in stage management which calls for much ingenuity. But, it will be objected,

this sort of thing is not possible. How can children act a play which has taxed the powers of the greatest actors? The answer is that we do not expect them to rival the greatest actors; and, as corollary, that the quality of acting shown by an intelligent boy who is really interested (in "Hamlet" or any other Shakespeare play) is generally better than would be expected. Moreover, the whole object of this class-room acting is not to raise a brood of great actors, but to bring into what we must call (unfortunately) the "study" of Shakespeare something near to what Shakespeare intended when he wrote the plays.

Of the other plays, "A Midsummer Night's Dream" simply cries out to be acted by boys and girls — so does "As You Like It." "The Tempest" presents some scenes of great value for class-room work. "Twelfth Night" is crowded with delightful situations: take, for but one example, the duel between Viola and Sir Andrew. The historical plays are less generally read by young people than those which have been mentioned; but there are some excellent bits to be found in them. The character of Falstaff, for instance, is one which should be better known in schools: the Gadshill Scenes in the First Part of "King Henry IV" show him at his best (see I. 2, II. 1, II. 2, II. 4, III. 3). It is quite possible to cut out any occasional coarseness without injury to the play. The same is true of the Recruiting Scene (Second Part, III. 2). The historical plays are full of fine character studies and noble poetical passages.

For those teachers who wish to step outside the class-room and give Shakespeare before a "real" audience, it may be suggested that the matter is not nearly so difficult

as it seems. No elaborate scenery is required, for it is a remarkable thing about Shakespeare's plays that while they lend themselves to the most beautiful and artistic stage-settings that can be created, yet at the same time they can be acted with equal effect under the simplest possible conditions. Those who have seen the Ben Greet Players and other similar companies who aim at simplicity will know that scenery by no means makes the play. A room with slightly raised stage, simple lighting, costuming of good materials and colors — these are all that are actually necessary to the setting. If to these can be added clear voice and easy stage presence, all the conditions of a thoroughly adequate performance are present. Even these plain requirements, however, are not gained all at once. But there is one thing which will smooth out many a rough place — the enthusiasm of the actors. The mere suggestion of a public performance will arouse intense interest in the average class reading Shakespeare. This interest may be turned into channels which involve a surprising amount of hard work, and will carry that work through.

Acting outside the class-room.

The public performance should grow out of the regular class work, for in this way the intimate discussions of the daily routine can be made to bear good fruit. Thus, too, the performance will not seem to be something outside, and apart; it will develop as the natural result of all that has been learned in the class-room. The equipment of the young players will be sound, they will have grown gradually and naturally into the parts they are to play, and the actual "coaching" will become a very pleasant thing. Both teacher and pupil will gain much from a

play thus worked out; many theories will be tested, many plans tried.

And over all the endeavor, all the failures and recoveries, will be the feeling of how much it is worth while; how good it is, in a school play, to face big problems; to touch behind the play a great personality. Thus wrought out the acting takes on dignity; the actor's mind becomes stored with fine images, with thoughts that are clean and beautiful.

All the world's a stage,
And all the men and women merely players . . .

It is something to follow the goodly company of those who have interpreted on the stage the great truths that Shakespeare found in life and set forth in noble words.

SUGGESTED SCENES FOR DRAMATIZATION

The following scenes from some of the Plays will be found easily adaptable to school use.

A Midsummer Night's Dream.

The Fairy Scenes. Act II, scenes 1, 2; Act III, scene 1; Act IV, scene 1.

The Clown Scenes. Act I, scenes 2; Act III, scene 1; Act IV, scene 2; Act V, scene 1.

The Merchant of Venice.

The Trial Scene. Act IV, scene 1.

Twelfth Night.

The Tricking of Malvolio. Act I, scene 3; Act II, scene 3; Act II, scene 5; Act III, scene 4; Act IV, scene 2; Act V, scene 1.

The Duel Scene. Act III, scene 2; scene 4.

Henry IV, First Part.

The Robbery and the "Men in Buckram." Act I, scene 2; Act II, scene 1; scene 2; scene 4; Act III, scene 3.

These scenes should not be attempted without a good Falstaff. Any coarseness can be readily eliminated by intelligent editing.

Henry V.

The French Lesson and the Wooing of Katherine. Act III, scene 4; Act V, scene 2, in part.

Appendix.

Julius Caesar.

The Murder Scene. Act III, scene 1.

Antony's Speech. Act III, scene 2.

These two scenes may be taken consecutively and have been found to be very effective in the hands of intelligent boys. Everything depends upon the quality of the speaking and acting — the scenery may be either very simple or as elaborate as may be permitted by the resources of the school.

Hamlet.

The Ghost Scenes. Act I, scene 1; scene 2, beginning with the entry of Horatio, Marcellus, and Bernardo; scenes 4 and 5. This selection will not, of course, make a play complete in itself. The dramatic quality, however, is unusually interesting, while the question of scenic effect presents a fascinating problem to any class that is willing to work it out.

The Gravedigger Scene. Act V, scene 1. It should close with the line: "Should patch a wall to expel the winter's flaw." So arranged, the scene possesses great possibilities for careful acting.

An enthusiastic teacher who understands his Shakespeare can make adaptations from almost any of the plays. Time, patience, and hard work are needed; but there is probably no branch of English teaching where the rewards are so thoroughly satisfactory.

BOOKS OF INTEREST TO STUDENTS OF SHAKESPEARE

[A bibliography of works on Shakespeare would make a volume of considerable size. Here are a few of the most useful books for students and teachers.]

A Life of William Shakespeare.
SIDNEY LEE. The Macmillan Co.

The Facts about Shakespeare.
NEILSON AND THORNDIKE. The Macmillan Co.

Shakespeare.
WALTER RALEIGH. The Macmillan Co.

Introduction to Shakespeare.
EDWARD DOWDEN. Charles Scribner's Sons.

William Shakespeare.
JOHN MASEFIELD. Henry Holt and Co.

Shakespeare: the Boy.
W. J. ROLFE. Harper Bros.

Shakespeare's England.
WILLIAM WINTER. Moffat, Yard and Co.

Shakespeare Manual.
F. G. FLEAY. The Macmillan Co.

Shakespeare and the Modern Stage.
SIDNEY LEE. Charles Scribner's Sons.

The Development of Shakespeare as a Dramatist.
GEORGE P. BAKER. The Macmillan Co.

Shakespeare's Theatre.
ASHLEY H. THORNDIKE. The Macmillan Co.

Handbook to the Works of Shakespeare.
MORTON LUCE. George Bell and Sons.

Appendix.

Characters of Shakespeare's Plays.
WILLIAM HAZLITT. J. M. Dent (Everyman's Library).

Elizabethan England.
L. WITHINGTON. Walter Scott (London).

Shakespeare and Music.
EDWARD W. NAYLOR, Mus. Bac. J. M. Dent & Co. (London).

An interesting story of Shakespeare's times is *Master Skylark*, JOHN BENNETT (the Century Co.). Scott's *Kenilworth* is a story of London and Warwickshire in 1575, and *The Fortunes of Nigel* gives a good picture of London in 1604 — the year of "Othello." *Judith Shakespeare*, by WILLIAM BLACK, is a masterly tale of the Elizabethan period. Alfred Noyes' *Tales of the Mermaid Tavern* (Frederick A. Stokes Co.) is a series of imaginative stories written in beautiful poetry and dealing with men and events of Shakespeare's day. Another good book in the same field is *Anne of Feversham*, by J. C. SNAITH (Appleton's).

The great "Variorum" edition of Shakespeare's works, edited by H. H. FURNESS (J. B. Lippincott Co.), contains besides the plays and poems a collection of comment and criticism by all the great Shakespeare scholars for the last two hundred years.

EXPLANATORY NOTES

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ = *persons of the drama; the cast*

The list of Dramatis Personæ is not found in the early editions of the play; it was inserted in 1708. The Stage Directions also were added by later editors. The division into acts and scenes was not made until 1676, when the acts were marked off; the scenes following later. The Quartos have no such division, and in the Folios it covers only Acts I and II. The traditional arrangement is not accepted by some of the Shakespeare critics, who hold that it is unsuitable and suggest a rearrangement as follows: Acts I and V remain as they are; Act II ends with the present III. 1, and Act III with the present IV. 3. Such a plan, they say, would be thoroughly Shakespearian; "each act has its unity — the first is filled by the Ghost, the second by Hamlet's assumed madness and the King's attempts to fathom it, the third by the doings of one tremendous night; the fourth contains miscellaneous incidents, and the fifth ends all things." You will find it an interesting study to divide the play thus for yourself and see how far your judgment agrees with the opinion of the critics.

ACT I

Scene 1

Elsinore. A platform before the castle. Elsinore was a Danish seaport on the island of Seeland. The scene takes place at the castle of Kronburg, which lies to the east of the town.

The playwright must first put his audience in possession of such knowledge as is needed for a proper understanding of the situation at the opening of the play. Thus, we learn in the first scene of the death of the old King and his reappearance in arms to denote that "all is not well"; of the danger of war

and the need of strong leadership in Denmark. The second scene shows the relation of Hamlet to the reigning monarch and indicates his state of mind. These "first scenes" in Shakespeare's plays form an interesting topic for study. In "The Merchant of Venice," for example, the opening words of Antonio — "In sooth, I know not why I am so sad" — strike the keynote of the action and prepare us for what is to follow. "Julius Cæsar" opens with the contention between the two elements in Rome — the common people, who have turned out to cheer for Cæsar, and the aristocrats, who are faithful to the memory of Pompey. "Macbeth" begins with thunder and lightning, a "blasted heath," and three horrible supernatural creatures who are concocting evil for the hero." "The Tempest" shows us storm and shipwreck and the play develops the results of the disaster. And so with the other plays; in every case we find some suggestion in the opening scene which prepares us, or arouses our interest, or excites our sympathy, and thus makes a definite connection between audience and players at the earliest possible moment.

Line **2. Nay, answer me**: The pronoun is emphatic. Francisco is on guard and has the right to challenge. Bernardo thereupon gives the password for the night: "Long live the King!" **unfold**: disclose, reveal.

6. upon your hour: at the appointed time.

13. rivals: partners, sharers. The word originally meant those who lived by the same *rivus*, or stream, and had equal rights to use it for irrigation purposes. Hence there were frequent disputes, and hence the modern meaning of the word gradually developed.

15. liegemen: followers, retainers. **Dane**: the King.

16. Give you: God give you; an elliptical sentence.

19. A piece of him: spoken jestingly.

21. What, has this thing appeared? The Ghost has been a topic of conversation between the others, but Horatio does not believe in it.

23. fantasy: imagination, fancy.

29. approve: confirm, prove true.

36. yond: yonder. **pole**: the North Star.

37. illume: light up, illuminate.

39. beating: striking, tolling.

41. figure: form, appearance.

42. scholar: It was the medieval belief that ghosts could be "exorcised," or driven away, by certain prayers recited in Latin. Hence Horatio, the educated man, was best fitted to deal with evil spirits.

44. harrows: a strong word, meaning to move greatly, to horrify. See I. 5. 16. Note the sudden change in the feelings of Horatio.

45. It would be spoke to: it wishes to be spoken to.

46. usurp'st means "usest without right." The Ghost has taken for wrong usage both the night and the form of the King.

48. the majesty of buried Denmark: the King who has recently died. **Denmark**: the king of Denmark, a form common throughout the play.

53. How now, Horatio! Bernardo is triumphant at proving himself right.

55. on't: of it.

57. sensible and true avouch: proved by the evidence of my senses. Avouch means "proof." Note the complete change in Horatio.

62. parle: conference, parley.

63. sledded Polacks: the Poles, who were traveling in sledges. This expression has been interpreted in several different ways. The word "polack" is still used in some parts of the Eastern States.

65. jump: exactly, precisely.

66. stalk: stride.

67. In what particular . . . state: "What special line of thought to follow, I don't know; but, speaking generally, I should say that this foretells some evil thing for Denmark." **bode**: foretell. **eruption**: political upheaval.

71. observant: close.

72. toils: makes to toil, burdens. Used transitively.

74. mart: traffic, marketing.

75. impress: forced labor, impressment. **sore**: heavy, burdensome.

77. toward: threatening, at hand.

80. whisper: rumor, report.

83. pricked on: incited, urged on. **emulate**: jealous, emulous.

86. sealed compact: secret treaty.

87. Well ratified by law and heraldry: sanctioned both by common law and by the laws of arms.

89. seized of: possessed of.

90. a moiety competent . . . vanquisher: "An equal portion was pledged by our king, which Fortinbras would have won had he been victorious."

93. covenant: agreement.

94. carriage of the article: meaning, or tenor, of the articles of agreement.

96. unimproved mettle: unused energy, or untested courage.

97. skirts: borders, outskirts.

98. sharked up . . . diet: "gathered at random a body of desperadoes, for no pay but their keep." Note the vigor of "sharked up" — scooped up anyhow, like a shark feeding.

100. stomach: courage, resolution. "Gives an opportunity for courage."

103. compulsatory: compulsory, compelling.

106. head: cause.

107. romage: turmoil, bustle.

109. Well may it sort: it is very appropriate. **portentous**: ominous.

111. question: cause.

112. mote: speck, atom.

113. palmy: flourishing, glorious.

114. Julius: Shakespeare's play of "Julius Cæsar" was written just before "Hamlet." In this play, as in "Hamlet," dire warnings appear of coming events. See II. 2. 19–24:

> Fierce fiery warriors fought upon the clouds,
> In ranks and squadrons and right form of war,
> Which drizzled blood upon the Capitol;

The noise of battle hurtled in the air,
Horses did neigh, and dying men did groan,
And ghosts did shriek and squeal about the streets.

115. sheeted: new-risen from the dead and clad in grave-clothes. **gibber**: gabble, chatter.

117. As stars with trains of fire: Something seems to be omitted between this phrase and the preceding sentence. Supply: "Such things were seen as."

118. Disasters in the sun: An eclipse of the sun was supposed to foretell dangerous times. The word "disaster" is derived from the Greek word for "star" and is a survival from the ancient science of astrology, which dealt with the supposed influence of the stars upon human life and mundane affairs. We still speak of an "ill-starred ship," or of a man being born "under a lucky star." The references to astrology throughout English literature are innumerable. Here is an interesting example from Milton's "Paradise Lost":

the sun new ris'n
Looks through the horizontal misty air
Shorn of his beams, or from behind the moon
In dim eclipse disastrous twilight sheds
On half the nations, and with fear of change
Perplexes monarchs.

Book I. 594–599.

the moist star: the moon, which influences the tides.

119. Neptune's empire: the sea.

120. Was sick almost to doomsday: had lost its light as if the end of the world had come.

121. precurse: forewarning. **fierce**: terrible, fearful.

122. harbingers: messengers, forerunners. Literally, officers sent ahead of the king to arrange for lodgings for the royal party. **still**: always, constantly.

123. prologue: The Prologue was an actor who appeared on the stage to announce the general meaning of the play. **omen**: fatal event.

125. climatures: regions, country.

126. Soft: Hush! A common expletive in the plays.

127. I 'll cross it, though it blast me: To "cross" a specter, or to pass over the spot where it had been seen, was to put yourself in great danger, as the spirit would then have power over you. **Blast**: destroy.

131. to thee do ease and grace to me: "that may help thee and win me favor."

133. art privy to: hast secret knowledge of.

134. happily: perchance, haply. **foreknowing**: foreknowledge, prescience.

136. if thou hast uphoarded, etc.: Note the three questions asked by Horatio. Is there some good deed to be done? Canst thou prophesy some danger to Denmark? Or dost thou wish to reveal buried treasure?

140. partisan: a long spear, a halberd.

143. majestical: stately, majestic.

146. malicious mockery: evil jesting.

150. the cock: It was an old superstition that no spirit could wander abroad after cock-crow.

152. god of day: the sun.

154. extravagant and erring spirit: extravagant, roaming beyond his proper boundaries as set in "sea or fire, in earth or air"; erring, wandering about. Note the changes in the modern usage of these words.

155. confine: appointed place.

156. made probation: made proof, was a proof.

157–164. Marcellus tells one of the common superstitions of the time.

158. 'gainst: equivalent to "in preparation for." The word is still used in some country districts in England: "Keep the dinner hot 'gainst father comes home."

160. bird of dawning: the cock.

162. The nights are wholesome: The Elizabethans did not think the night air was healthful. In "Julius Cæsar" Portia says to Brutus:

> Is Brutus sick,
> And will he steal out of his wholesome bed,
> To dare the wild contagion of the night,

And tempt the rheumy and unpurged air
To add unto his sickness?

strike: destroy by their influence. Another reference to astrology. We still use the expression "moon-struck"; and "lunatic" means, literally, one who has been injured by the influence of the moon. Other words with a similar history are: jovial, saturnine, mercurial, martial.

163. takes: infects with disease. **charm**: in an evil sense.

164. gracious: benign, full of blessings.

165. in part believe it: Horatius, as an educated man, does not altogether agree with his friend's superstition.

166–167. A well-known and beautiful passage. "Russet" means gray; it is dawn, not sunrise.

173. loves: The word is frequently used by Shakepeare to mean strong friendship between man and man. Hence, in "Julius Cæsar":

Your friend and lover, Brutus.

in "The Merchant of Venice":

Bid her be judge
Whether Bassanio had not once a love.

QUESTIONS AND TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION

1. What do we learn in this scene about Hamlet? About the King?
2. Can you indicate any differences in the characters of the three soldiers Horatio, Marcellus, and Bernardo?
3. Why does Horatio know more than the others about the condition of affairs in Denmark?
4. Was Horatio one of the regular sentries?
5. What is the purpose of bringing him in to see the Ghost?
6. Do you note any difference in the conversation between the three men before and after the appearance of the Ghost?
7. Make a stage setting of this scene, arranging for the movements of the various characters.

8. What supernatural beliefs do you find touched upon by the speakers?

9. "Break we our watch up." Had Horatio the right to give such an order?

10. Why does the Ghost enter twice?

ACT I

Scene 2

We gain from this scene a very clear idea of Hamlet's mental state at the opening of the play. He has no notion of his uncle's guilt, but he dislikes him extremely and he feels very bitter about his mother's hasty marriage. Yet he cannot speak — what, indeed, can he say? Hence "all the uses of this world" seem to him "flat, stale and unprofitable." One gleam of happiness comes in the appearance of his best friend, Horatio; but the news that Horatio brings fills him with dismay.

Claudius makes a dignified speech to his assembled courtiers, but the hypocritical nature of the man soon shows forth in his conversation with Hamlet. He acts wisely as a ruler and takes with decision the necessary steps against Norway. We can understand how the Council chose him to be King.

Enter the King. The scene usually begins, on the modern stage, with a procession of state, in which Hamlet walks slowly, dressed in black. He is a somber figure among the brilliant court costumes.

2. that: though. **it us befitted**: it was suitable for us. The king uses the royal "we."

5. discretion: the sense of what was owing to the Court.

8. sister: brother's wife, sister-in-law.

9. jointress: sharer.

10. defeated: marred, disfigured.

13. dole: sorrow, grief.

14. barred: failed to consult.

17. that you know: that which you know; or, as you know.

18. weak supposal: poor opinion.

19. by: because of.

21. colleagued with the dream of his advantage: "fancying, also, that he sees a chance to take advantage of us."

23. importing: demanding, importuning.

24. bonds of law: legal formalities. See scene 1, lines 86–88.

31. gait: proceeding, advance.

31–32. levies, lists, proportions: legal authority, muster rolls, contingents.

33. out of his subject: from his (Norway's) subjects, and without his personal knowledge.

38. the scope of these delated articles: The King warns his envoys not to exceed the powers conferred on them by the articles here set out in full. "Allow" is attracted into the plural by the word which immediately precedes it.

43. suit: request, favor.

44. of reason: anything in reason. **Dane**: See I. 1. 15.

45. lose your voice: speak in vain. The King now changes to "thou" as a mark of familiarity.

47. native: kindred, related.

49. thy father: old Polonius, who seems to have been instrumental in securing the throne for the present King.

50. My dread lord: a form of greeting.

51. leave and favor: your kind permission.

56. pardon: leave to depart.

62–63. "Choose your own time to depart; spend it as you will to your best advantage."

65. A little more than kin and less than kind: Hamlet's muttered comment, upon the hypocritical King's "my cousin and my son." The passage is difficult to interpret, but it may be taken to mean: "Yes, I am more than mere kin to you, but less than kind (because I hate you)." "I am a little more than kin to you (since you married my mother), but I am not your kind." Can you explain why Hamlet's first remark should be an "aside"?

67. too much i' the sun: a bitter play upon the "son" just made use of by the King.

68. nighted color: a reference to the black clothes of Hamlet.

70. vailed lids: downcast eyes. Vail means "lower," as in "The Merchant of Venice":

> Vailing her high top lower than her ribs,
> To kiss her burial.

74. it is common: Why does he repeat his mother's word? How would you read his answer?

75. particular: special.

76. Seems, madam! Hamlet bursts forth in a protest against his mother's well-meant suggestion that he should forget his sorrow.

78. customary: according to custom.

79. windy suspiration of forced breath: heavy sighs.

81. 'havior of the visage: appearance of the face.

83. denote: picture, portray.

85. But I have that within which passeth show: Compare with this the passage in V. 2. 205–206:

> But thou wouldst not think how ill all 's here about my heart.

passeth: surpasses.

90. That father lost, lost his: that father who died, lost his father also.

91. term: space of time.

92. obsequious: fitting, dutiful; with reference to "obsequies," funeral observances.

93. condolement: sorrow, grief.

95. a will most incorrect to heaven: a will not properly submissive to the decrees of heaven.

97. simple: silly, weak.

98–99. as common As any the most vulgar thing to sense: as usual as anything which is a matter of common experience.

103. whose common theme: The antecedent of "whose" is "reason."

107. unprevailing: useless, unavailing.

109. most immediate: nearest.

110. nobility: high degree.

112. impart: give all I can bestow. **For your intent**: as regards your purpose.

113. to school in Wittemberg: The famous University of Wittemberg was founded in 1502. Did Hamlet leave his studies there when his father died? Horatio was one of his fellow students, and we shall meet two others later on — Rosencrantz and Guildenstern.

114. retrograde: contrary.

115. bend you: make up your mind.

120. Hamlet replies to his mother, not to the King.

123. gentle and unforced accord: polite and willing assent.

124. grace: honor.

125–128. Dr. Samuel Johnson says of this passage: "The king's intemperance is very strongly impressed; everything that happens to him gives him occasion to drink."

125. jocund: merry, joyous.

127. rouse: deep draught. **bruit**: report noisily.

129–158. The cause of Hamlet's grief and anger is revealed in this speech. The broken language throughout shows strong emotion.

130. resolve: dissolve.

132. canon: divine law.

137. merely: completely, absolutely. Hamlet's melancholy inclines him to make out as black a picture as possible.

140. Hyperion to a satyr: Hyperion was Apollo, the sun-god and a type of manly beauty; a satyr was a type of deformity.

141. beteem: allow, permit

149. Niobe: "Daughter of Tantalus, whose children were slain by Apollo and Artemis, while she herself was turned into stone upon Mount Sisyphus in Lydia, where she weeps through the summer months."

150. wants discourse of reason: lacks the reasoning faculty.

154. most unrighteous because most insincere.

155. had left the flushing: had ceased to produce redness. **galled**: sore with weeping. In "Twelfth Night," Shakespeare speaks of "eye-offending brine."

158. I must hold my tongue: Why?

160–167. Note the courtesy of Hamlet's greeting to the three newcomers. His own troubles are laid aside in this courteous interchange. As the scene goes on, however, his manner changes to an agonized interest in the dreadful tale that Horatio tells him.

162. I 'll change that name with you: "I 'll be your servant, and you shall be my friend."

163. what make you: what are you doing.

166. Good even, sir: evidently spoken to Bernardo.

168. truant: roving, wandering.

171. truster: believer.

173. Elsinore: the residence of the Danish kings. It lies about fifty miles north of Copenhagen.

178. it followed hard upon: it came very soon afterwards.

179. funeral baked meats: It was customary to make a feast at a funeral. The remark is satirical: Hamlet resumes his bitterness.

180. furnish forth: serve for.

181. dearest foe: Shakespeare uses " dear " of anything that touches the emotions deeply.

189–190. These lines have an intense emotional force.

191. Season your admiration: restrain your astonishment.

192. attent: attentive. **deliver**: tell, narrate.

197. vast: void, waste.

199. at point exactly: at all points. **cap-a-pe**: from head to foot.

203. truncheon: baton, staff of office.

206. impart they did: an inversion to give solemnity to the tale.

217. morning cock: See I. 1. 147.

229. beaver: the front part of the helmet, used to protect the face.

234. constantly: steadily, firmly.

237. tell: count.

242. warrant: guarantee.

247. Let it be tenable in your silence still: regard it as a secret which ought to be kept.

248. hap: happen, occur.

250. requite: repay.

253. Your loves, as mine to you: "Hamlet courteously disclaims the rank of master and requests them to regard him as an equal and friend."

255. doubt: suspect, fear.

QUESTIONS AND TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Write out the meaning of the King's speech in your own words.

2. Do you gain any indications as to the character of the King from his utterances in this scene?

3. What is the cause, as far as you can determine at present, of Hamlet's sadness?

4. Read aloud, with two of your classmates, the lines from 160 to the end of the scene. Be sure that you understand what is said and then see how far you can adapt the intonations of your voice to the significance of the lines. Note especially such passages as 188–194, 220, 223–225, 229–236.

5. Why does Hamlet ask his friends to speak to no one else about the Ghost?

ACT I

Scene 3

This scene is intended to give us some idea of the types that we shall find at Court. Polonius is a fussy politician who is verging on old age, his mind stored with trite sayings. Like the Justice in "As You Like It," he is

> Full of wise saws and modern instances,

which he can readily bestow on others, but which he does not especially observe himself. Laertes is a "gilded youth" of the day. He is what in Shakespeare's time was called "Italianate," which means that he has a pretty extensive experience of the "seamy side" of life. In his own fashion, he loves his sister;

but his affection does not in any way interfere with plans for his own enjoyment. He has come to Elsinore to attend the funeral of the late king; now he is anxious to return as soon as possible to the delights of Paris. Ophelia is a charming and pathetic figure. As we meet her in this scene, we find that she is submissive, perhaps weak; certainly no fit mate for Hamlet. It is plain enough that Polonius and Laertes have no faith in the purity and honor of Hamlet, nor of Ophelia herself. Their point of view is cynical and worldly wise.

3. convoy: means of conveyance — "as you find the opportunity to send your letters."

5. trifling of his favor: the slight attention which he has paid you.

6. a toy in blood: a passing fancy.

7. primy: spring-like.

9. suppliance: amusement, dalliance.

11. crescent: growing.

12. this temple: the human body. "As the body grows, the abilities of the mind (inward service) increase equally." The metaphor comes from St. John II. 21.

15. cautel: deceit.

16. the virtue of his will: his virtuous intention. The whole passage means: "He cannot, like low-born persons, choose for himself whom he will wed, for the welfare of the country depends upon his choice; therefore he must consider the needs of the state in making his decision."

25. It fits your wisdom: "you must believe his promises only so far as his position allows him to fulfill them."

28. main voice: general opinion.

30. credent: credulous, believing.

39. canker: canker-worm.

40. buttons: buds.

42. contagious blastments: blighting influences.

46. But, good my brother: Ophelia is ready enough to accept the advice of Laertes, but she thinks that he ought to be consistent and lead a decent life himself.

47. ungracious: graceless.

49. puffed: bloated — through self-indulgence.

50. the primrose path of dalliance treads: enjoys all the pleasures of dissipation. A famous passage in "Macbeth" runs: "I had thought to let in some of all professions, that go the primrose way to the everlasting bonfire."

51. recks not his own rede: pays no attention to his own advice. **O, fear me not**: "Don't worry on my account." Laertes is a little impatient at his sister's suggestion; he is ready to give advice rather than to take it. It is amusing, therefore, to see him forced to listen to a sermon from his father.

54. occasion: opportunity.

59–80. The well-known advice of Polonius to Laertes is too formal and precise to seem spontaneous. It is quite possible that the public of Shakespeare's day recognized the speech as being commonplace and conventional, and therefore in keeping with the character of the man whom Hamlet later in the play calls a tedious old fool (see II. 2. 217). At the same time, the advice is sound. Polonius was not altogether a fool, even if he was tiresome.

59. character: write, imprint. Accent on second syllable.

60. unproportioned: unsuitable.

61. vulgar: common.

62. adoption tried: choice tested.

64. dull thy palm: make thy hand callous by shaking hands with every one.

67. opposed: opponent.

69. censure: opinion.

74. select and generous: show the best taste.

77. husbandry: economy, thrift.

81. season: ripen, cause thee to take it to heart.

83. tend: wait.

90. Marry: a mild expletive, common in Shakespeare's day. **bethought**: thought of.

94. so 't is put on me: so it has been impressed on me.

97. it behoves: it is fitting for.

99. tenders: promises.

101. green: inexperienced.

102. unsifted: untried.

107. sterling: sound currency. **tender**: regard, have a care for.

109. Running it thus: overworking the play upon the word "tender." **tender**: show.

112. go to: an expression of contempt, or impatience.

115. springes: snares. The woodcock was supposed to be brainless, and hence easily caught.

116. prodigal: adjective for adverb.

122. entreatments: solicitations, conversation.

125. a larger tether: he has more freedom.

126. in few: in short.

127. brokers: go-betweens, negotiators.

128. investments: garments, vestments.

129. implorators: solicitors, implorers.

130. This is for all: once for all.

132. slander: abuse, disgrace.

QUESTIONS AND TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Why does Laertes warn his sister against Hamlet?

2. For on his choice depends
The safety and the health of this whole state.

What does Laertes mean? Is his argument sound? Would the same words apply to an heir-apparent at the present day?

3. Why does Laertes go to Paris by sea, rather than overland?

4. The advice of Polonius to his son has been called "a set of copybook maxims." Do you agree with this statement? Does Polonius suggest to Laertes morality, or merely self-protection? Do the closing lines (78–80) seem to you to be in keeping with the rest of the speech?

5. How does Polonius' opinion of Hamlet differ from that held by Laertes?

6. What do you think of Ophelia, as judged by her speeches in this scene?

ACT I

Scene 4

Scenes 4 and 5 are practically continuous. In them the final elements of the problem which Hamlet has to face are placed plainly before us. How will he meet the situation? He believes the Ghost and is eager to revenge — at first; but almost immediately he begins to hesitate. He plans to simulate madness, in order to gain time: presently we shall see him, by the device of the Play, testing the truth of what he has heard. Perhaps the closing words of the Act give the keynote to his character as we are to understand it:

> The time is out of joint. O, cursed spite
> That ever I was born to set it right!

1. shrewdly: keenly, piercingly.

2. eager: sharp.

6. held his wont: was accustomed.

ordnance: cannon.

8. wake: hold revel.

9. wassail: carousal, drinking-bout. **swaggering upspring**: a wild dance.

10. Rhenish: red wine.

11. bray out The triumph of his pledge: bitterly ironical, as shown by the use of the word "bray."

15–16. One of the "familiar quotations" of which "Hamlet" contains so many. "It would be more to our honor to break off this custom than to observe it." What the custom was may be seen by an account given by an English traveler in Denmark, near the date of the play: "The king (Christian IV, who reigned from 1588–1649) feasted my lord once, and it lasted from eleven of the clock till towards morning; during which time the king began thirty-five healths. . . . The king was taken away at last in his chair."

18. traduced and taxed: blamed and censured.

19. clepe: call, name.

20. addition: title.

21. at height: to the utmost.

22. "The best and most valuable part of the praise that would otherwise be attributed to us."

24. mole of nature: natural blemish.

27. complexion: temperament, natural disposition.

28. pales and forts of reason: the strongholds of the intellect.

30. plausive: pleasing, popular.

32. nature's livery, or fortune's star: a defeat which is due either to nature or accidental misfortune.

34. undergo: sustain, support. "As many as can be accumulated upon man."

35. general censure: the general opinion, the final public estimate.

36–37. the dram . . . scandal: a passage which has been widely discussed. The general meaning is clear: a man's virtues, be they as pure as grace, shall in the general judgment take corruption from one particular fault, even as the "dram of eale" reduces all the good stuff it is mixed with to its own low level. But the exact interpretation had best be left to the critics.

The value of the desultory conversation, up to this point, is its truth to life. Here are three men under a great strain. In such circumstances they will talk of anything rather than the danger before them. Hence the shock of the Ghost's entrance. Upon the casual remarks of the watchers suddenly impinges the tremendous personality from beyond the grave.

39. Angels and ministers of grace defend us! The traditional stage usage makes a pause after these words, allowing Hamlet to recover himself before addressing the Ghost.

40. spirit of health: a healed, or saved, spirit. In antithesis to "goblin damned."

42. intents: intentions, purposes.

43. questionable: inviting question, or conversation.

47. canonized: sacredly buried, interred with the rites of the church. **hearsed**: entombed, coffined.

48. cerements: grave-clothes.

49. inurned: entombed, placed in the sepulcher.

53. the glimpses of the moon: the glimmering light of the moon, struggling through the clouds.

54. we fools of nature: playthings of nature. We make sport for nature, who mocks us when we try to pry into her mysteries.

55. disposition: mood.

59. impartment: communication.

61. removed: secluded, remote.

65. a pin's fee: a pin's worth.

71. beetles: projects, juts over.

73. sovereignty of reason: the command of your reason; **or,** the control which reason exercises over a sound mind.

75. toys of desperation: freaks of madness.

81. Be ruled: listen to reason.

82. artery: ligament.

83. Nemean lion: one of the monsters slain by Hercules. **nerve**: muscle, sinew.

85. lets me: hinders me.

87. imagination: fancy.

89. Have after: let us go after him.

91. it: the issue. **Nay**: "Let us not leave it to heaven, but do something ourselves."

QUESTIONS AND TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION

1. What opportunities are afforded in this scene for impressive stage setting? Make a list of remarks or words in the course of the conversation which would serve as suggestions for constructing scenery.

2. "The air bites shrewdly." What is the time of year?

3. Write out the exact meaning of lines 23–38. Do you think Hamlet's view is correct?

4. What danger does Horatio see for Hamlet in following the Ghost?

ACT I

Scene 5

1. I 'll go no further: It is to be supposed that the Ghost has led Hamlet to a distance. Some time elapses before his comrades find him.

6. bound: ready, prepared; or, obliged.

11. fast in fires: referring to the punishment of sinners in Purgatory.

12. days of nature: lifetime.

18. knotted: interwoven.

19. an end: on end.

20. porpentine: porcupine.

21. eternal blazon: revelation of the secrets of eternity.

31. apt: quick, ready.

32–33. the fat weed That roots itself in ease on Lethe wharf. Lethe was the river of forgetfulness in the lower world, and those who drank of it became oblivious of everything. A weed growing on Lethe bank (wharf) and soaked in Lethe water all the time would therefore be the very type and symbol of dull forgetfulness.

37. forged process: false statement.

38. rankly: grossly.

40. O my prophetic soul! Hamlet has already had some inkling of the truth.

50. decline upon: sink down to.

52. to: compared to.

56. sate: satisfy.

61. secure: careless, unsuspicious.

62. hebenon: a deadly poison, possibly henbane.

68. sudden vigor: rapid and violent action. **posset**: curdle.

69. eager: sour, acid.

71. tetter: a diseased thickening of the skin.

75. dispatched: deprived.

77. Unhouseled: without having received the last Sacrament. **disappointed**: unprepared for death. **unaneled**: not having received extreme unction—the last rite for the dying.

81. nature: natural affection.

83. Taint not thy mind: "keep thy motives pure, unmixed with thoughts of mere revenge." **contrive**: plot, plan.

87. matin: morning.

88. uneffectual: ineffectual, lost in the light of morning.

91. couple hell: call on hell also.

92. instant: instantly, at once.

93. stiffly: strongly.

95. distracted globe: Hamlet puts his hands to his head.

96. table: tablet.

97. fond: foolish.

98. saws: sayings, maxims. **pressures**: past impressions.

104. smiling: Hamlet remembers his uncle's smile as he called him "our son."

105. tables: writing-tablets, memorandum-book. **meet**: fitting. Why should Hamlet "write it down"? Is it not that his mind is almost unhinged; that this feverish action shows he scarcely knows what he is doing? Note carefully his attitude towards Horatio and Marcellus during the rest of the scene; the former remonstrates with him for his "wild and whirling words." The whole conversation brings out strongly the terrible effect of the Ghost's communication. Hamlet is unstrung; his laughter is hysterical, and it is not until the end of the scene that he shows some return to self-control in the courteous: "Nay, come, let 's go together."

112. secure: guard.

113. Hillo! a falconer's cry to recall his hawks.

119. once: ever.

125. circumstance: detail, circumlocution.

130. I 'll go pray: a touch of deep pathos.

143. Nay, but swear 't: Hamlet binds his friends to secrecy in order that nothing will be revealed which may tend to check his plans for revenge.

146. upon my sword: because the hilt of a sword was in the form of a cross.

148. truepenny: honest fellow.

154. hic et ubique? here and everywhere?

161. pioner: a pioneer (as we spell it to-day) was a soldier who did the digging of trenches, mines, and so forth.

163. "And therefore receive it without doubt or question."

165. your philosophy: "Your" is colloquial. Compare "Antony and Cleopatra," II. 7. 29: "Your serpent of Egypt is bred, now, of your mud by the operation of your sun, so is your crocodile."

170. antic: fantastic, disguised. Hamlet deliberately planned to act madness, in order to hide his real purposes.

172. encumbered: folded. Sir Henry Irving illustrated the idea, however, by taking an arm of Horatio and Marcellus as if about to gossip with them.

176. ambiguous giving out: doubtful indication.

184. friending: friendliness.

185. lack: be wanting.

189. Nay, come, let 's go together: Hamlet wishes to count them as friends and equals, not as inferiors. As they stand aside to let him go first, he motions them to join him.

QUESTIONS AND TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION

1.

> My hour is almost come,
> When I to sulphurous and tormenting flames
> Must render up myself.

What do these lines mean?

2. Line 80 has been assigned by some critics to Hamlet. Can you give any reasons why this should be done?

3. What is the immediate effect upon Hamlet of the Ghost's revelations? Make an analysis of his feelings as shown by his speeches during the rest of the scene.

4. Read aloud the passage 124–130, trying to interpret the feelings of the speaker.

5. Why does Hamlet ask his friends to swear secrecy?

6. Can you give any dramatic reason for the Ghost speaking "beneath"?

7. Comment upon the significance of lines 187–188.

8. What length of time is covered by the First Act?

ACT II

Scene 1

The important part of the first scene is the behavior of Hamlet towards Ophelia. This leads Polonius to tell the King that he is mad. To the audience it is clear that Hamlet has gone to Ophelia hoping for sympathy and help, but has found her too weak to aid him in his trouble. The fussiness of Polonius and his low standards of morality are well shown in his directions to Reynaldo; his age is suggested by his lapse of memory.

4. inquire: inquiry.

7. Danskers: Danes.

8. keep: lodge, dwell.

10. by this encompassment and drift of question: by such round-about methods. **encompassment and drift**: scope and tendency.

11. more nearer: the use of the double comparative, or double negative, is common in Elizabethan English.

11–12. "You will approach indirectly nearer to your object than you could by direct and special questions."

19. put on him: attribute to him.

20. forgeries: inventions, false tales. **rank**: gross, wicked.

22–24. wild and usual slips . . . liberty: such dissipations as are natural to young men left to themselves.

28. season: qualify.

31. quaintly: artfully, skillfully.

32. taints of liberty: stains, blemishes of freedom.

34. unreclaimed blood: untamed passions.

35. Of general assault: such as attack all men.

38. a fetch of warrant: a justifiable stratagem.

39. sullies: blemishes.

42. converse: conversation.

43. prenominate: aforesaid.

45. closes with you in this consequence: agrees with you in this way.

50. By the mass! Polonius here shows the weakness of age, in forgetting what he was going to say.

58. O'er took in 's rouse: overcome by drink.

61. of reach: far-sighted.

62. windlasses: winding and circuitous ways, indirect attempts. **assays of bias**: a metaphor from the game of bowls, in which one does not aim at the Jack directly, but in a curve so that the bias brings the ball round.

63. by indirections: by indirect methods. Polonius, like all schemers, prefers the dark and devious way to the straight path of truth.

65. You have me: you understand me, "you get me?"

68. Observe his inclination in yourself: find out his tendencies by personal observation.

70. Let him ply his music: let him go his own way.

74. closet: private apartment.

75. unbraced: unfastened.

77. down-gyved to his ancle: his stockings so low about his ankle that they reminded Ophelia of the fetters of criminals.

81. he comes before me: Hamlet turns to Ophelia, whom he loves, for comfort and help; but he soon finds that she is not strong enough to give him the spiritual assistance he needs.

87. perusal: examination.

99. ecstasy: frenzy.

100. property: quality. **fordoes**: destroys. The prefix "for" has a negative sense, as in forget, forbear, forbid; or an intensive significance as in forwearied, forgive, forsake. Note, however, the "fore" verbs, like forecast, foretell, foresee, forestall.

107. access: approach.

109. quoted: observed, noted.

110. beshrew: a mild oath.

111. proper to: characteristic of, appropriate to.

112. to cast beyond ourselves: to be oversuspicious.

The vice of old age is too much suspicion.

116. An obscure passage. The sense seems to be: "Hamlet's mad conduct might cause more grief if we hide it than it can create hatred if we tell it."

QUESTIONS AND TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Why does Polonius send Reynaldo to Paris?
2. Select three or four passages which seem to show the character of Polonius.
3. From your reading of the play so far, what reasons can you give for the visit of Hamlet to Ophelia and his behavior to her?
4. What change takes place in the feelings of Polonius towards Hamlet? Why?

ACT II

Scene 2

In this scene Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, two old friends of Hamlet, are sent by the King to spy upon him. It does not take him long to see through their plan, and there is much pathos in his discovery of the double part played by the fellow students whom he thought he could trust (see lines 265–287). The coming of the Players suggests to him a method of testing the truth of what the Ghost told him. For the rest, we have a sort of summary of Hamlet's mental condition; the madness which he so easily assumes, the bitter irony against his enemies and his invective against the world in general.

2. **Moreover that**: besides that.
6. **sith nor**: since neither.
7. **that**: that which.
7–10. "I cannot imagine what it is, except the death of his father, that has so shaken his self-control."
11. **of so young days**: from so early youth.
12. **so neighbored to his youth and humor**: so closely in touch with his age and disposition.
13. **vouchsafe your rest**: do us the favor of staying.
16. **occasion**: opportunity.
17. **opened**: revealed.
19. **he hath much talked of you**: a touch of pathos. Two friends, whom Hamlet has always liked and trusted, are made to

act as spies. The fact that they consent so readily shows that they are unworthy of his friendship.

22. gentry: courtesy.

23. expend: spend.

24. supply and profit: fulfillment and advancement.

27. of: over.

30. bent: inclination.

34. Note the interchange of names. It is a pretty clear indication that the men are conventional and commonplace.

38. practises: ideas, plans.

40–45. The cordial greeting of the King, and the effusive loyalty of Polonius, seem to show that there is some secret between them — that each depends upon the other.

41. still: constantly.

47. trail of policy: conduct of public affairs.

52. fruit: dessert.

53. do grace: do honor.

55. distemper: disorder.

56. main: main cause, chief point.

58. sift: get the truth out of him.

59. our brother Norway: the formality of etiquette.

61. Upon our first: upon our first request.

66. impotence: lack of power.

67. falsely borne in hand: deceived. **arrests**: legal restraints.

71. To give the assay of arms: to put the matter to the test of war.

73. fee: value.

77. pass: passage.

79. regards of safety and allowance: terms securing the safety of the country and regulating the passage of troops.

80. It likes us well: it pleases us well.

81. on more considered time: when we shall have had time to consider the matter more carefully.

83. well-took: well-handled.

85. This business is well ended: Polonius thinks he has solved the whole question of Hamlet's madness and is full of his subject. He talks all round the point and is sharply rebuked by the Queen

for his prolixity. The whole conversation contained in lines 85 to 167 is a masterly portrayal of senile decay, and will repay careful study

86. expostulate: discussfully.

90. brevity is the soul of wit: wit is "knowledge," "understanding." Polonius here unconsciously condemns himself.

91. flourishes: ornaments, decorations.

95. More matter, with less art: come to the point.

98. figure: figure of speech.

105. perpend: consider.

110–124. The letter is probably an ordinary love-letter of the time: such stilted language was not uncommon in the affectations of the Elizabethan age.

110. beautified: a fantastic variant for "beautiful." Polonius criticizes the word in order to appear as a connoisseur of literary taste.

120. I am ill at these numbers: I cannot write good poetry.

123. whilst this machine is to him: while this physical machine, his body, keeps on going.

126. more above: moreover.

136. "If I had kept their secret as closely as a desk or notebook keeps letters."

137. given my heart a winking: made my heart shut its eyes.

138. with idle sight: with an indifferent eye.

139. round: direct, straightforward.

140. bespeak: address.

141. out of thy star: outside of thy sphere, or walk in life.

145–151. The irony of the situation lies in the fact that the old politician thinks he has cleared up the whole matter through his own sagacity, and is able even to map out the progress of the disease, when Hamlet all the while had been only pretending madness.

147. fast: abstention from food.

148. watch: loss of sleep.

149. lightness: light-headedness.

157. circumstances: circumstantial evidence.

159. the centre: the middle of the earth. There is excellent humor in this certainty of Polonius about a situation wherein he is entirely at fault. **try**: test.

160. four hours: used for an indefinite time.

163. arras: tapestry hung on the walls, for use as well as beauty. There was often a space of a foot or more between the arras and the wall. The name is derived from tapestry having been made originally at Arras in Northern France.

164. encounter: meeting.

165. thereon: therefore.

168. poor wretch: used in pity and tenderness. Compare IV. 7. 182.

170. board him presently: speak to him at once. **O, give me leave**: pardon me for interrupting you.

172. God a' mercy: God be thanked.

174. fishmonger: It is probable that Hamlet meant nothing by this word. If we wish to force a meaning, however, the significance may be: "You are sent to fish out my secret."

181–184. The meaning seems to be: "if the sun breed maggots in a dead dog, how much the rather will your daughter run risks? let her not be in the way of temptation."

185. How say you by that? What do you say to that?

192. matter: Hamlet purposely misinterprets the word to mean "cause of dispute."

195–199. Hamlet pretends to read from the book. He detests Polonius and bitterly satirizes his peculiarities.

197. purging: discharging.

200. not honesty: not decent.

201. should be: would be.

206. pregnant: wise, full of meaning.

207. a happiness: a felicity of expression.

213–215. A pathetic transition from banter to seriousness — quite unobserved, of course, by Polonius.

217. Hamlet has had more than enough of the old politician and turns with relief to the newcomers. Note the complete change in his manner.

225. indifferent: ordinary, average.

233. doomsday: the Day of Judgment, the end of the world.

240. confines: places of confinement.

244–246. One of the deeply philosophic remarks which occur in all of Shakespeare's plays.

260. fay: faith. **I cannot reason**: I cannot carry on this argument.

262–264. Hamlet puns upon the word "wait." "No, indeed, I will not class you with the rest of my servants, for, to tell you the truth, my retinue is detestable."

264. in the beaten way of friendship: speaking as friend to friend. Hamlet drops the somewhat forced style of conversation they have been using.

269. too dear a halfpenny: too dear at a halfpenny, valueless.

273. Up to this point, Hamlet has been really glad to see his friends and to join in a wit combat with them. But now something wakes his suspicions. After a pathetic appeal to their old friendship, he gives them such an account of his mental state as will most surely convince the King, when it is reported to him, of his madness.

275. modesties: simplicities.

276. the good king and queen: bitter sarcasm.

278. conjure: entreat, implore.

279. consonancy: friendship, accord. They had been brought up together.

281. proposer: orator, speaker. **charge**: appeal to.

282. even and direct: plain and straightforward.

285. I have an eye of you: I have my eye on you, I'm watching you.

288–290. "So shall my anticipation forestall your disclosure of the reason why you were sent for, and your pledge of secrecy to the king and queen remain unbroken."

291. forgone all custom of exercise: given up all my usual exercise.

295. brave: glorious.

296. fretted: adorned, ornamented. A "fretted" roof was one decorated with carved patterns.

299. faculty: ability.

300. express: perfectly modeled for its purpose.

301. apprehension: perception, understanding.

303. quintessence: a term in the ancient science of alchemy, signifying the purest part of anything.

309. lenten entertainment: meager, like the fare in Lent.

310. coted: passed by, outstripped. A coursing term. One hound was said to "cote" another when he outran him and turned the hare.

314. foil and target: blunted rapier and shield.

315. the humorous man: the man who represented "humors," or eccentricities. He appeared frequently in contemporary plays and usually was pretty well knocked around — hence Hamlet's remark about him. Ben Jonson's dramas, "Every Man in his Humor" and "Every Man out of his Humor," deal with this type.

316. tickle o' the sere: ready to laugh at anything, like a gun which would go off at the least touch. The "sere," or "sear," was the catch in the gun-lock that held back the trigger.

317. "The lady shall say what she likes, even if she says more than is set down and so spoils the blank verse."

322. residence: fixed abode, as opposed to strolling. The lot of strolling players was never a very happy one; it would be better for them to stay in town at their own theatre.

324. inhibition: prohibition — a technical term for an order restraining or restricting theatrical performances.

325. innovation: change — understood as for the worse. The word is said to refer to the license granted January 30, 1603, for the Children of the Revels to play at the Blackfriars Theatre and elsewhere.

The whole passage is an amusing comment by Shakespeare upon the popularity of the Children's Companies, which were seriously affecting the fortunes of the men players at this time (1603–4). The ranks of the playwrights themselves were divided upon the question and their plays often contain allusion to the controversy.

The "Children's Companies" form a curious chapter in the history of the English Stage. They had a distinct effect on the drama, and at their height they were very carefully organized. The most ancient Company was The Children of the Chapel Royal. A "Master of Children" was appointed in 1475. Originally part of the King's Household, they accompanied him on his movements and were boarded and lodged in the palace. When their

voices changed, openings were found for them and they were started in life. The first record of the Chapel Boys as actors is found in 1502; they can be traced through the century until towards its close we find them acting at Court, in Inn-yards and finally at the Blackfriars Theatre. From 1575 to 1610 they seem to have been very popular — the public liked them. Moreover, they acted well; the public schools[1] were full of Latin plays, and one writer complains that "they make all scholars play-boys." Ben Jonson, who is said to be referred to by Shakespeare in the passage, wrote a deeply appreciative poem on a little fellow who died while a member of one of the Companies. They were well trained and carefully looked after and there is no doubt that the fine attainment of actors between 1600 and 1617–18 was due in no small measure to the training received in the Children's Companies.

They did a great deal for the stage. The feminine element came in with the plays for children, for much could be done with the highly trained and graceful boy-actors. Shakespeare found an audience ready for his women. They maintained the fondness for the lyric; many were written for boys to sing, and we find hence many beautiful songs scattered through Shakespeare's plays. Again, they preserved for the stage the element of satire, which was sometimes very sharp. The author could put things in children's mouths which it would not be possible for grown actors to say. Many plays were written for the Children's Companies, marked by charm of phrase and clever dialogue: they were light, graceful, musical, sometimes fantastic. The children's dramatist was John Lyly, and some of his plays were: "Mother Bombie," "Endymion," "Alexander and Campaspe," "Midas" (allegorical comedies); "Galathea," "Woman in the Moon" (pastoral comedies).

327. followed: popular.

330. their endeavor keeps in the wonted pace: they are trying as hard as ever.

[1] *I.e.*, the great endowed schools, such as Eton, Rugby, Harrow, Winchester, etc.

331. aery: brood (usually applied to hawks). **eyases**: unfledged birds. An "eyas" was a young untrained hawk, not long taken from the nest.

332. cry out on the top of question: drown debate, or argument, with their shrill voices. **most tyrannically clapped**: violently applauded.

335. are afraid of goose-quills: "are afraid of being satirized by the pens of playwrights who write for the children's theater." The whole passage, lines 330–336, may be paraphrased as follows: "The professional players are trying as hard as ever, but what brings them down is the competition of this nest of young hawks (the boys of the Chapel Royal, etc.), who carry on the whole dialogue at the top of their voices, get ridiculously applauded for it, and make such a noise in the regular theatres that true dramatists, whose wit is as keen and strong as a rapier, are afraid to encounter these brats, who fight, as it were, with a goose-quill!"

338. escoted: paid for, maintained.

338–339. Will they pursue the quality no longer than they can sing? "Will they follow the profession of players only until their voices change?"

342–343. exclaim against their own succession: *i.e.*, injure the business for adult players, while they themselves are about to become adults.

344. much to do: much ado.

345. tarre: set them on — used especially of setting dogs on to fight.

346. "For a time there was no market for plays which did not bring in this controversy."

352. carry it away: carry off the prize, win the day; in modern slang, "get away with it."

353. Hercules and his load too: an allusion to the Globe Theater, the sign of which was Hercules carrying the world on his shoulders. It was Shakespeare's theater, and only recently built. The Children carried the day even against the Globe.

355–358. Hamlet cites the case of his uncle as another example of the changeability of popular favor. "Those who made faces at him while my father lived would give any money today for his

miniature." **'Sblood** means "God's blood." It was a common oath.

362–367. Hamlet suddenly thinks that he has not given Rosencrantz and Guildenstern a proper princely welcome, and that the attendants may have noticed some lack in his greeting of these old friends. As he does not wish to be seen receiving a company of Players more warmly than two guests of the Court, he takes pains, before the entrance of the Players, to add to his former welcome some details of ceremony with which all are familiar. It is obvious, however, that he trusts them no more, and that his old affection has become a mere form of words. He knows "a hawk from a handsaw"— he can distinguish between a friend and an enemy. **appurtenance**: proper accompaniment. **comply with you in this garb**: be ceremonious with you in this fashion. **extent**: behavior.

370. mad north-north-west: The obscurity of this speech is probably due to our ignorance of the sport of falconry, or hawking, any reference to which would be instantly and vividly clear to an Elizabethan audience. Here is an interesting note by an English Shakespeare scholar: "The expression obviously refers to the sport of hawking. Most birds, especially one of heavy flight like the heron, when roused by the falconer or his dog, would fly down the wind in order to escape. When the wind is from the north the heron flies towards the south, and the spectator may be dazzled by the sun and be unable to distinguish the hawk from the heron. On the other hand, when the wind is southerly, the heron flies towards the north, and it and the pursuing hawk are clearly seen by the sportsman, who has his back to the sun, and without difficulty knows the hawk from the hernsew." **handsaw** is a corruption for "heronshaw," or heron.

375. swaddling-clouts: baby-clothes.

376. happily: haply, perchance.

379. Hamlet pretends to be carrying on an ordinary conversation so that Polonius will not think they have been talking about him. When he prepares to surprise them with his bit of news, Hamlet spoils his effect by getting in the first word about actors.

382. Roscius was a famous Roman actor of the time of Cicero.

385. Buz, buz! "Stale news!"

388–393. A sarcastic reference to the subdivisions as officially outlined in government licenses. That issued to the Globe Company in 1603 authorized them "freely to use and exercise the Arte and Facultie of playing Comedies, Tragedies, Histories, Enterludes, Moralls, Pastoralls, Stage-plaies, and such other like.' **scene individable**: a play in which the scene does not change about, *e.g.*, "The Tempest." This was the Unity of Place. **poem unlimited**: a play in which the scene shifts from place to place, as in most of Shakespeare's dramas.

Seneca and **Plautus** were two Latin dramatists whose works were frequently acted at the Universities. Seneca was the fashionable model for tragedy; Plautus for comedy. **For the law of writ and the liberty, these are the only men**: "Both for repeating correctly what was written and for making up as they go along, these men are unrivalled."

397. Hamlet's rejoinder is in his assumed character of madman. He sings part of an old ballad. The first "row" of this "pious chanson" may be quoted:

> Have you not heard these many years ago,
> Jephthah was judge of Israel?
> He had one daughter and no mo,
> The which he loved passing well:
> And as by lot,
> God wot,
> It so came to pass,
> As God's will was,
> That great wars there should be,
> And none should be chosen chief but he.

411. abridgements: used in a double sense: the players abridge his conversation by entering, and an "abridgement" was, technically, a dramatic performance. See "Midsummer's Night's Dream," V. 1. 39:

> Say what abridgement have you for this evening,
> What masque, what music?

The Players have an important place in the development of the plot. Their coming suggests to Hamlet a method of testing the value of the Ghost's communication; and this, in turn, leads to the catastrophe of the play.

414. valanced: fringed with a beard. "Valance" means the hangings of a bed.

415. Remember that in Shakespeare's day, and for one hundred and fifty years afterwards, the female parts were always taken by boys.

417. chopine: a kind of high cork shoe.

418. The boy would become ineligible for his part when his voice changed. **cracked within the ring**: Coins had a ring or circle stamped upon them, inclosing the sovereign's head. If a crack ran from the edge through this ring, the coin became uncurrent.

420. French falconers: French sportsmen seem to have been willing to fly their hawks at any kind of bird.

427. 't was caviare to the general: it was too fine for the general public. Caviare is a Russian condiment made of sturgeon's roe, pressed and salted. In Shakespeare's time it was a new and fashionable dainty. A writer in 1597 tells of a countryman who received "a little barrel of caviare," which he opened and tasted, but promptly sealed up again and sent back, with the message: "Commend me to my lady, and thank her . . . and tell her we have black soap enough already; but if it be any better thing I beseech her ladyship to bestow it upon a better friend that can better tell how to use it."

429. cried in the top of mine: with more authority than mine.

430. well digested in the scenes: the scenes well organized.

431. as much modesty as cunning: as much simplicity as skill.

432. no sallets in the lines to make the matter savory: no indecency to add "spice" to the play — they were good honest lines, without trimmings.

433–434. no matter in the phrase . . . affection: nothing in the language by which the author might be accused of affectation.

435. more handsome than fine: contained more order and proportion than elaborate ornament.

436. Æneas' tale to Dido. There is much discussion as to whether Shakespeare inserted this Pyrrhus episode in mockery of a poetic style which was popular at the time, or really thought as he makes Hamlet speak; that is, whether or not he was satirizing the taste of the time in this passage. Perhaps the best solution is the simplest: the Players are friends to Hamlet and he would naturally speak kindly of their work; the lines recited, with their rant and exaggeration, are just what one would expect from a strolling company. Of course the difficulty lies in reconciling the sincerity of Hamlet's praise with the "blood and thunder" nature of the lines quoted. We must remember, also, that it is necessary to mark out clearly the "play within a play" which the actors are to perform. Hence the poetry must be exaggerated in some way in order to distinguish it from the poetry of the play itself.

440. the Hyrcanian beast: the tiger.

444. the ominous horse: the great wooden horse by which Troy was captured. The Greeks pretended that they had given up the siege and sailed away, leaving behind on the beach a huge wooden horse. The Trojans were suspicious at first, but finally decided to haul it into the city. This led to the fall of Troy; for the horse concealed a band of Greek warriors who crept out at night, opened the gates to their countrymen and destroyed the city.

446. heraldry: designs. **dismal**: horrible. The word is always used by Shakespeare in a strong sense.

447. total gules: all red. "Gules" is a heraldic word for red; as "argent" for silver, "azure" for blue, "or" for gold, etc. **tricked**: sketched over, as a coat of arms is treated. "Trick" is another heraldic term.

449. impasted: made into a paste by the heat of the burning streets.

452. o'er-sized: covered as with size, or glue. **coagulate**: hardened, clotted.

457. discretion: judgment. Polonius has a very high opinion of his own critical faculties.

460. rebellious to his arm: too heavy for him.

463. fell: deadly, terrible.

464. senseless: inanimate, without senses. **Ilium**: a poetical name for Troy.

470. a painted tyrant: a tyrant in a picture.

471. like a neutral to his will and matter: as if indifferent to his purpose and deed.

473. against: just before. See note, p. 266.

474. rack: floating vapor in the sky.

475. the orb below: the earth.

476. hush: a noun used as an adjective, modifying "orb." **anon**: suddenly.

477. region: air.

479. Cyclops' hammers: the Cyclops were the huge one-eyed workers at the forge of Vulcan.

480. Mars' armor: Mars was the god of War. **proof eterne**: everlasting strength, or resisting power.

481. bleeding: either "streaming with blood," or "causing blood to flow."

485. fellies: the rim of a wheel — the felloes. Fortune was commonly represented with a wheel, to suggest the "ups and downs" of life. See "King Lear," V. 3. 174:

> The wheel has come full circle, I am here.

486. nave: hub, center.

490. jig: A jig meant not only a comic dance, but any merry song, or the tune to which it was sung.

491. Hecuba: wife of Priam and mother of Paris.

492. mobled: muffled up. The word was unusual, even in Shakespeare's day. Hamlet is puzzled; while Polonius, feeling he must say something, approves of it.

496. bisson rheum: blinding tears.

507. milch: soft, tender, mellow. The word survives in dialect in some parts of England as "melsh," or "melch," and is used of mellow fruit, or mild weather. In an old English poem we read:

> The vine's soil be not too molsh nor hard,
> But somewhat molsh, neither too fat nor lean.

In gardening, the word survives in "mulch" — soft stuff spread over the roots of newly planted shrubs or trees.

508. passion: violent sorrow.

512. bestowed: placed, lodged.

513. the abstract and brief chronicles of the time: the summary of the day and its history in brief. A little later Hamlet says that it is the function of the player to "show . . . the very age and body of the time his form and pressure." See III. 2. 25–26.

515. you were better: it would be better for you.

519. God's bodykins: a familiar oath, meaning "God's body."

520. after his desert: as he deserves.

527–528. The Murder of Gonzago was one of the "revenge" plays of the time.

531. a speech of some dozen or sixteen lines: These lines are probably found in Lucianus' speech (III. 2. 233–238). The idea has occurred to Hamlet which is worked out in the next Act; his object in altering the play is to introduce a scene which will exactly reflect the crime of Claudius.

534–535. look you mock him not: He will not allow the "tedious old fool" to be laughed at by strangers.

538. Ay, so: said impatiently. Hamlet wishes to be alone.

539. The Player's emotion makes Hamlet realize his own weakness of purpose.

542. conceit: fancy, imagination.

543. wanned: grew pale.

544. aspect: appearance.

545. whole function: action of all his faculties.

550. cue: motive, hint. In drama, the word which is the signal for an actor to enter.

553. free: innocent.

554. amaze: confound, bewilder.

557. muddy-mettled: irresolute, dull spirited. **peak**: pine, mope.

558. John-a-dreams: a sleepy, apathetic person. **unpregnant**: indifferent to, inept, with no spark of life.

560. property: kingly right, or condition.

561. defeat: destruction.

562. pate: head.

568. pigeon-livered: mild-tempered. **gall**: courage.

570. region kites: kites of the air. See note, line 477.

572. kindless: unnatural, inhuman.

580. About, my brain! Go to work! Set about it!

583. presently: as soon as possible.

589. tent: probe. **blench**: flinch, start.

591–592. the devil hath power To assume a pleasing shape: A common belief of the time, when people thought that ghosts were "not the wandering souls of men, but the unquiet walks of devils, prompting us to murder and villainy."

594. such spirits: as the weakness and melancholy just mentioned.

595. abuses me: deludes me, deceives me.

596. relative: conclusive, to the purpose. **this**: the story told by the Ghost.

596–597. Sir Henry Irving, one of the great Hamlets, made an interesting interpretation of these lines. As he said them he rushed over to a pillar and as the curtain descended was scribbling in his tablets the notes for his "dozen or sixteen lines."

QUESTIONS AND TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Why did the King send for Rosencrantz and Guildenstern? What hint as to their personalities is given in the early portion of this scene?

2. Analyze carefully the part played by Polonius. Shakespeare makes his personality quite distinct — what do you make of him? Should you like to have him as a friend? How do the King and Queen feel towards him? What is Hamlet's opinion of the old courtier?

3. Read again the directions given by the King to the two messengers in I. 2. 17–39, and compare with the answer brought back from Norway. What should you say as to the King's ability as a ruler?

4. Test the truth of Hamlet's exclamation: "These tedious old fools!"

5. At what point does Hamlet begin to distrust the sincerity of his friends? Can you explain how he guards himself against them?

6. Find some references to the London life of Shakespeare's day.

7. Find out all you can about the Children's Companies. Consult your School Librarian. Do you think a group of boys to act Shakespeare could be organized among your own friends?

8. Does Hamlet really admire the speech given by the Player? Or is he speaking sarcastically? or merely talking to please the Players?

9. What do you think of the criticisms of Polonius?

10. Describe the effect produced upon Hamlet by the Player's speech.

11. How is our interest held in suspense at the end of this Act?

12. Read over the passage beginning

I have of late — but wherefore I know not . . .

This has been termed the most beautiful prose passage in the plays. Give some reasons for the statement.

ACT III

Scene 1

This scene has been assigned by some critics to the preceding Act. The King has been questioning Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, who bring him a false report. Hamlet meets Ophelia, and although her appearance revives for a moment his old love for her, yet almost at once he realizes that she is deceiving him. He is obliged to act the madman again, and his anguish at the severing of the last bond between them makes the madness almost real. We learn also, pretty definitely, that though every one else is misled, the King has his suspicions and plans to get rid of him.

1. drift of circumstance: roundabout method.
2. confusion: confusion of mind.
3. grating: disturbing, irritating.
7. forward to be sounded: easy to question.

8. keeps aloof: The subject " he " is omitted.

12. forcing of his disposition: against his inclination.

13. niggard of question, etc.: slow to begin conversation, but ready to answer our questions. Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are not telling the truth, because they are dissatisfied with their attempt to sound Hamlet for the King. As a matter of fact, it was just the other way in the interview: Hamlet saw through their schemes, and remained master of the situation.

14–15. Did you assay him to any pastime ? " Did you test him by suggesting any amusement ? "

17. o'er-raught: overtook and passed.

26. give him a further edge: arouse his interest, stimulate him.

29. closely: secretly.

31. affront: meet, confront.

32. espials: spies.

33. bestow: place, station.

44–46. " Read this book, so that the appearance of your being thus engaged may serve as a reason for your being alone." The book was probably a book of prayers.

47. too much proved: found true by frequent experience.

49. O, 't is too true ! The first sign of remorse in the King.

56–88. In this famous and beautiful soliloquy, Hamlet considers the question of making away with himself in order to avoid the difficulties which life has brought upon him. With characteristic irresolution, however, he can come to no definite conclusion.

56. To be: to live.

59. Or to take arms against a sea of troubles: The mixed metaphor here has given rise to much discussion, but the meaning is clear enough, and the technical difficulty vanishes when we remember that several contemporary writers used the same thought in practically the same words. Moreover, Shakespeare may have had in mind a custom attributed to the early Northern warriors. " Some of them are so bold . . . that they throw themselves into the foaming floods with their swords drawn in their hands, and shaking their javelins, as though they were of force and violence to withstand the rough waves."

65. rub: a term from the game of bowls, meaning a collision that hinders the ball in its course.

67. shuffled off this mortal coil: rid ourselves of the troubles of this mortal life. "Coil" means "trouble," "turmoil."

68. give us pause: make us hesitate, force us to take time for reflection. **respect**: consideration.

69. of so long life: so long lived.

70. time: life in this world.

71. contumely: insult, despising.

73. insolence of office: Shakespeare elsewhere refers to the harshness of men "dressed in a little brief authority."

75. quietus: discharge, release. A legal term, which meant a discharge or acquittance given on settlement of an account.

76. a bare bodkin: a mere dagger. **fardels**: burdens, bundles.

77. grunt: groan.

79. bourn: boundary, frontier.

83. conscience: consideration, thought about the future.

84. native hue: natural color.

85. cast: surface coloring. **thought**: brooding, pensiveness.

86. pith and moment: meaning and importance.

87. with this regard: considered in this way. **currents**: courses. **awry**: aside, crooked.

88. Soft you now! Evidently said to himself as he suddenly sees Ophelia.

89. orisons: prayers.

94. re-deliver: give back.

103. Ha, ha! Here Hamlet hears a rustle behind the arras, and at once suspects the truth. His whole manner changes; he assumes a wildness of utterance which, while it deceives Ophelia and the two spies, but poorly conceals his own anguish in discovering the treachery of the girl he loves. **honest**: pure, virtuous.

107–108. your honesty should admit no discourse to your beauty: "your virtue should stand sentry over your beauty, and allow no communication with it."

109. commerce: intercourse.

117–118. virtue cannot so inoculate our old stock but we shall relish of it: "No matter how much virtue has been en-

grafted on us we shall always smack of our original wickedness." A purposely cynical remark. **inoculate**: engraft. **our old stock**: the original evil of our nature.

122–129. Hamlet is trying to persuade Ophelia that he is not worthy of her love.

122. indifferent honest: fairly virtuous.

130. Where's your father? He puts her directly to the test. She lies to him, and he bursts out into invective against women in general. So frantic is his language, that Ophelia is convinced that he is mad.

144. you jig, you amble, you lisp: you skip about, you walk in a foolish way, you talk affectedly.

145. make your wantonness your ignorance: you excuse immodest words or deeds by pretending you know no better.

148. all but one: the King.

152. The expectancy and rose of the fair state: "his country's hope, the fine flower and ornament of the state."

153. The glass of fashion and the mould of form: "the mirror of fashion and the model upon which all endeavored to form themselves."

155. deject: dejected, heartbroken.

159–160. blown youth Blasted with ecstasy: youth in its full flower blasted with madness.

162–164. The King is evidently suspicious, though Polonius sticks to his original theory.

165. on brood: brooding.

166. the hatch and the disclose: verbs used as nouns. "Disclose" was a technical term for young birds chipping the shell.

170. our neglected tribute: the Danegeld, which was first levied by Ethelred the Unready in 994 to buy off the Danish marauders.

172. variable: varying.

173. something-settled: somewhat settled.

174–175. puts him thus From fashion of himself: makes him unlike himself, different from his ordinary habits and bearing.

183. round: straightforward, plain spoken.

184–185. in the ear Of all their conference: within hearing of their whole conversation.

185. if she find him not: if she fail to discover his secret.

QUESTIONS AND TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Give the result of the interview of the two spies with Hamlet, as stated by them to the King and Queen.

2. What do you think of Ophelia's consenting to follow out her father's plan? See especially lines 44–49.

3. Why is the King remorseful? What does he mean by the words, "O heavy burthen"?

4. Write out, in your own words, a careful summary of the passage beginning

To be, or not to be, that is the question.

When you have done this, read the lines aloud to see if you can bring out the beauty of the passage as well as its meaning.

5. Does Hamlet come to any definite conclusion in this soliloquy?

6. Is it to be supposed that the King and Polonius overhear this speech, or is it intended for the audience alone?

7. Do you think that Hamlet still loves Ophelia? How would you have him act as he receives back his presents?

8. At what point does he perceive that he is being spied upon? Suggest some way in which he might be made aware of the fact.

9. Why does Hamlet speak so harshly? What is the effect upon Ophelia?

10. Is the King convinced that Hamlet is mad? What plan does he propose?

11. What further test is suggested by Polonius to find out the truth about Hamlet's grief?

12. In what ways have the theories held respectively by the King and Polonius been altered during the conversation which they have overheard?

ACT III

Scene 2

This scene, which lies at the center of the play, shows how Hamlet finally convinces himself of the King's guilt. In a sense it marks the climax of the action: all that has gone before leads up to the terrible disclosure when "the King rises"; all that follows is the direct result of what has been revealed. Throughout, Hamlet's personality is portrayed out in masterly fashion: his excellent advice to the Players: his appeal to that stanch friend, Horatio; his assumed wildness during the play; his effective dealing with Guildenstern; his testing of old Polonius.

As regards the language of the "play within a play" we must remember that it is necessary to make this portion stand out clearly from the main action. Hence the exaggerated speech put in the mouths of the Player King and Player Queen.

2. trippingly on the tongue: with clear and distinct articulation. "This dialogue of Hamlet with the Players is one of the happiest instances of Shakespeare's power of diversifying the scene while he is carrying on the plot." — COLERIDGE. Hamlet's advice is very shrewd and sensible; he is especially anxious that his own "dozen or sixteen lines" should be well delivered. Like most educated men of the time, he is deeply interested in the drama, and has a sound knowledge of what constitues good acting.

9 periwig-pated fellow: wearing a wig. At the time wigs were worn only by actors.

10. groundlings: those who stood on the ground in the "pit" of the theater. They paid a penny for admission. In a play by Ben Jonson they are called "the rude, barbarous crew, a people that have no brains, and yet grounded judgments: these will hiss anything that mounts above their grounded capacities."

13. Termagant: a boisterous Devil, in the old English Mystery Plays. **Herod**: another favorite character in the Mysteries, always acted with much noise and ranting.

14. I warrant your honor: I assure you we will.

19. from: contrary to.

23. pressure: imprint, impress. Be natural and true to life, says Hamlet.

24. come tardy off: too feebly represented.

25. censure: judgment, opinion. "The opinion of one judicious person you must allow to outweigh a whole theater-full of ordinary folk."

34. indifferently: fairly well.

37. The clown was a popular institution, well known to generations of theater-goers. He would often set the groundlings roaring by jokes of his own invention, quite apart from the play itself.

39. barren: stupid, foolish.

40. necessary question of the play: important development of the plot.

52. As e'er my conversation coped withal: as ever I engaged with in conversation. Hamlet's affection for Horatio is based on the fine and solid qualities of character which he here mentions. It is noteworthy that Horatio is with the Prince at the critical periods of his life. He is never found wanting.

57. candied: "sugared with hypocrisy."

58. pregnant hinges of the knee: ready to bend at the least hint.

59. thrift: gain, success. See "The Merchant of Venice":

> I have a mind presages me such thrift
> That I should questionless be fortunate.

60. my dear soul: my own soul.

60–63. "Ever since I was able to judge of men, my inmost soul has chosen you for itself."

66. blood and judgment: passion and reason.

67–68. See lines 339–347.

71. Something too much of this: a genuinely manly little remark. Hamlet breaks off with natural reticence. He does not want to appear sentimental, in view of the simple and sincere friendship which exists between them.

73. one scene: the " dozen or sixteen " lines.

76. with the very comment of thy soul: put your whole soul into it.

77. occulted: concealed, hidden.

78. unkennel: disclose, reveal.

81. Vulcan's stithy: the forge of Vulcan.

84. censure of his seeming: judgment of his appearance and behavior. **Well**: adjective — " it is well."

87. idle: foolish, light-headed, crazy.

90. the chameleon's dish: chameleons were supposed to live on air.

91. promise-crammed: Does Hamlet refer to the King's professions of love? See I. 2. 107–112.

93. these words are not mine: these words have no bearing on my question.

95. you played once i' the university: Plays were given regularly at Oxford and Cambridge.

99. I did enact Julius Cæsar. Shakespeare's play had appeared in 1602.

103. stay upon your patience: wait your convenience.

107. lie in your lap: it seems to have been a common act of gallantry to lie at the feet of a lady during any dramatic entertainment.

111. your only jig-maker: " O yes, I 'm a great merry-maker. Why should n't I be merry; see how merry my mother is, with my father dead only these two hours."

115. let the devil wear black, for I 'll have a suit of sables: a difficult passage. The sense seems to be: " I 'll give up mourning, I 'll throw off my inky clothes." In this case, sables must mean rich fur trimming, as far as possible removed from " customary suits of solemn black."

120. not thinking on: not being thought of.

121. the hobby-horse. This was a principal figure in the old morris-dances which were suppressed at the Reformation. In Shakespeare's time the hobby-horse was going out of fashion. Hamlet quotes from a ballad which laments that the hobby-horse is forgotten.

STAGE DIRECTION: *Hautboys play. The dumb-show enters.* The dumb-show exhibits to us precisely what we are to see again with the accompaniment of speech. That such procedure was not usual in English theaters is shown by Ophelia's question: "What means this, my lord?" Apparently Hamlet wishes to make sure, by the double representation, that the play shall come home to the King with its full significance.

123. miching mallecho: secret mischief.

125. belike: probably. **imports the argument**: foreshadows the plot.

135. the posy of a ring: short motto or line of verse inscribed within a ring. Some examples of Shakespeare's time are: God above, increase our love. Let love abide, till death divide. God's blessing be, with thee and me. See "The Merchant of Venice," V. 1. 147–150.

138. The play now goes on, interrupted by Hamlet's sarcastic comment, until the King, unable to bear the working of his conscience, rushes from the room. During all this time, we must remember, both Hamlet and Horatio watch him very keenly; no expression of his face escapes them. The play itself is purposely imitative of the older and cruder forms of the Elizabethan drama, both in the rimes and the stilted, artificial language — note, for example, the labored effect of lines 138–143.

147. cheer: cheerfulness, health.

148. I distrust you: I am anxious about you.

150. women's fear and love holds quantity: "women's fear and love are in direct proportion to each other, so that the more women love the more they fear."

151. in neither aught, or in extremity: they either fear and love not at all or they go to extremes.

152. proof: trial.

157. My operant powers their function leave to do: My vital powers are decaying.

164. Wormwood, wormwood: a symbol of remorse. Hamlet is watching the King's face, and sees a change come into it at the Player Queen's words, line 163.

165. instances: motives, inducements.

166. base respects of thrift: base, mercenary considerations.

172. validity: value, worth.

174. mellow: ripe.

175. necessary: inevitable.

176. debt: owing.

180. enactures: resolutions.

188. advanced: successful.

192. seasons: ripens, brings him to maturity in his true character.

200. "Pleasure by day and rest by night both be locked from me!"

202. "A hermit's fare in a cell be the limit of my attainment!"

203. "Every adverse thing that blanches the face of joy."

215. argument: plot of the play, subject.

220. tropically: figuratively. A "trope" is a figure of speech.

224–226. Bitterly ironical. "Free" means "innocent," "free from crime." **let the galled jade wince, our withers are unwrung**: a proverbial expression. A horse is "galled" by the saddle; its withers are wrung when the part between the shoulders is pinched or pressed too hard by it.

228. chorus: a personage introduced to explain the action of the play. Shakespeare uses a chorus in "King Henry V," before each act.

229. I could interpret, etc.: In the old puppet-shows the action was interpreted to the audience by some one seated on the stage. Note Hamlet's attitude towards Ophelia throughout the scene. He is bitter, even rude, to her, both to cure her of her love for him, and to convince the King of his madness. The effect upon Ophelia is seen in her pathetic attempts to carry on a conversation.

232. This line is from an old tragedy familiar to Elizabethan playgoers.

233–238. When we remember Hamlet's remarks to Horatio, 77–78, it would seem that these are the lines which he inserted in the play. The King's "occulted guilt" certainly reveals itself here.

234. confederate season: suitable time, favoring occasion.

236. Hecate's ban: "Ban" means curse. Hecate was the goddess of mischief and revenge. **infected**: poisoned.

237. dire property: deadly quality.

238. wholesome: healthy.

241. The "Italian" play mentioned has not been identified.

243. The king rises: At this point the action of the play reaches a climax. Hamlet has gained the information he sought; his way is now plain before him, if he has the determination to carry out his idea of revenge. For the moment, of course, he gives vent to the excitement which has been pent up within him.

253. a forest of feathers: a fine plume of feathers such as actors wore.

254. turn Turk: go to the bad.

254–255. Provincial roses: double rosettes of ribbon worn on the shoes. So named from Provence, where roses were much cultivated.

255. razed: slashed, or streaked, in patterns.

256. a cry: a company. Literally, a pack of hounds. Hamlet meant that his dramatic talent, as shown by the passage in the play, entitles him to a place with the actors.

257. Half a share: Horatio, carrying out the whimsical idea of Hamlet, says: "You are entitled to half a share in the company, at least." To which Hamlet replies: "No, indeed, a whole one!" The companies of the time were organized in three divisions: the "sharers" in the company, who got the most profits; the ordinary players, who received some part thereof; the lowest grade ("hireling"), paid a small fixed salary.

262. pajock: peacock. By some authorities the word is considered as equivalent to "patchocke," a ragamuffin. Elsewhere Hamlet calls Claudius "a king of shreds and patches."

270. recorders: a "recorder" was a kind of flute that was played like a flageolet.

272. perdy: an old-fashioned oath.

278. distempered: disturbed, upset.

280. choler: anger.

283. purgation: proof with a pun upon the medical meaning of the word.

285–286. "Put your conversation in some sensible form, and do not fly off so wildly from the point."

287. pronounce: speak on, go ahead.

291. Guildenstern resents the biting sarcasm of Hamlet's "You are welcome."

292. wholesome: reasonable.

294. your pardon: your permission to leave. See I. 2. 56.

303. amazement and admiration: bewilderment and wonder. Hamlet answers Rosencrantz without noting which of the two has spoken.

307. closet: private apartment.

310. trade: business, dealings.

312. these pickers and stealers: these hands. "By this hand!" was a common oath.

313. your cause of distemper: the cause of your disorder.

316. I lack advancement: I have not received my rights:

317–318. See I. 2. 108–109.

319. The whole proverb runs: "While the grass grows the steed starves." (While grass doth grow, oft starves the silly steed.)

321. To withdraw with you: Hamlet takes Guildenstern aside.

322–323. "Why do you keep working around me with your questions, as if you would drive me into a trap?" To "get the wind" of an animal in hunting was to move to windward of it, so that it would run away in the direction of the net or snare.

325. Probably Guildenstern is confused by Hamlet's direct accusation, and stammers out words that do not mean much. What he is trying to say may be that if he has gone too far it must be set down to excess of friendship.

333. 'T is as easy as lying: "and you 're good at that" — a bitterly scornful remark. **ventages**: air-holes.

339–347. Hamlet has lost patience with the two hypocrites and lets them hear the truth. Note that on the occasion of their next conversation with him (IV. 2) they drop the pretense of

friendship and speak almost brusquely. It will be understood that they are now ready enough for the commission which the King assigns them. **fret**: vex, annoy; also referring to the bars on the finger-board of a guitar.

351–360. Hamlet finds that Polonius is acting under instructions to humor — to "fool" — him. **They fool me to the top of my bent**: to the full extent of my inclination.

364. very witching time of night: the true time for witchcraft, the time when the power of evil is at its height. See Macbeth's famous "dagger" speech ("Macbeth," II. 1. 49–52):

> Now o'er the one half-world
> Nature seems dead, and wicked dreams abuse
> The curtained sleep. Witchcraft celebrates
> Pale Hecate's offerings. . . .

366. contagion: poison.

370. Nero murdered his mother Agrippina.

374. shent: reproached, put to shame.

375. To give them seals: to ratify them by deeds, *i.e.*, by using the dagger.

QUESTIONS AND TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Make a list of the suggestions which Hamlet gives the Players. Have you ever seen a play to which this advice might be applied?

2. Explain what Hamlet means by saying that the object of plays is "to hold the mirror up to nature; to show virtue her own feature; scorn her own image, and the very age and body of the time his form and pressure." Does this apply to plays of the present day? What do you suppose Shakespeare would have thought of a modern musical comedy or the "movies"?

3. What is Hamlet's opinion of Horatio? Find some instances throughout the play which justify this opinion.

4. Why does Hamlet speak thus to Horatio at this particular time?

5. Make a plan for a setting of this scene, marking the positions of the various characters and the place where the play is acted.

6. Point out some differences in the language of the Player King and Queen as compared with that of the real play. How do you account for the differences?

7. What is Hamlet's attitude towards Rosencrantz and Guildenstern?

8. Why does Polonius, upon his entry, agree with everything Hamlet says?

9. How does Hamlet feel towards his mother?

ACT III

Scene 3

The essential features of the scene are the determination of the King to put Hamlet out of the way and the failure of Hamlet to act definitely when the opportunity presents itself. "Now," he says, "I might do it; and now I *will* do it. . . ." But he does not do it: the "native hue of resolution" is "sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought," and his enterprise loses the name of action. The incident is typical of his character; he can plan, but not perform; he will act on impulse, or not at all. We see that for him there can be no real solution of his difficulties.

1. **I like him not**: I am uneasy about his present condition.
2. **range**: roam freely.
3. **commission**: official authority.
5. **terms of our estate**: the condition upon which the safety of our throne depends.
6. **hazard**: risk.
7. **ourselves provide**: prepare ourselves, make ourselves ready. The flattery of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern is obvious throughout.
8. **religious**: scrupulous.
11. **the single and peculiar life**: the individual, as distinguished from the King.
13. **noyance**: harm, injury.
14. **weal**: welfare, safety.

16. gulf: whirlpool. Cf. "Henry V," II. 4. 9–10:

> For England his approaches makes as fierce
> As waters to the sucking of a gulf.

17. massy: heavy, massive.

18. mount: mounting, support.

20. mortised: socketed.

21. annexment: appendage.

24. arm you: prepare yourselves thoroughly.

28. convey myself: place myself secretly.

29. to hear the process: to hear what goes on. **tax him home**: question him thoroughly.

30. as you said: The suggestion was really made by Polonius, but in the spirit of a courtier he ascribes the idea to the King.

33. of vantage: from a secret post of observation.

36–72. The King suffers from remorse, but he is unable to give up the fruits of his crime. The strange composition of his mind is seen in the fact that he has no thought of repentance for the second murder just planned. Shakespeare introduces this passage in order that the King may not appear as an impossible monster of treachery and cruelty. He shows some signs, at least, of human pity and remorse.

37. the primal, eldest curse: the curse pronounced upon the first murderer, Cain.

45–46. Compare "Macbeth," II. 3. 60 and V. 1. 31.

47. "To oppose sin face to face."

49. forestalled: prevented.

54. effects: gains.

56. offence: advantages won by the offense.

57–58. These two lines are an example of the confusion of metaphor which is sometimes found in the plays. Such confusion, however, in no case leads to obscurity in thought; the meaning is always clear. **Offence's gilded hand may shove by justice**: bribery may push justice to one side.

59–60. the wicked prize itself Buys out the law: the judge is bribed with a share of the spoil.

61–62. there the action lies In his true nature: there the action is laid before the court in its true nature. "Lies" is used in a legal sense.

64. what rests? what remains, is left?

68. limed: caught as with bird-lime.

69. make assay: make the attempt.

73. Hamlet's chance comes to conclude his vengeance with one stroke; but his fatal irresolution intervenes.

75. That would be scanned: that needs to be carefully thought over. The moment Hamlet begins to "scan," all is over with him as far as any immediate action is concerned.

78. A pause while he thinks it over.

79. this is hire and salary: this would be the deed of a paid assassin.

82. audit: his final account with heaven.

83. in our circumstance and course of thought: **'T is heavy with him**: "as we human beings look at facts and think them over there is a heavy balance against him."

85. him: *i.e.*, the King.

87. Hamlet sheathes his sword.

88. hent: purpose, design. Literally, grip, hold.

94. stays: awaits me.

95. This physic: this praying of yours. The line has an ironic bearing upon Hamlet himself. His own delay but prolongs the period of his ineffectiveness.

QUESTIONS AND TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Are Rosencrantz and Guildenstern sincere in their answers to the King's request? Or are they trying to curry favor? Or is what they say the ordinary language of etiquette?

2. Why does Polonius use the expression, "As you said," when he knows that the suggestion did not originally come from the King?

3. Read carefully the King's speech beginning, "O, my offence is rank, it smells to heaven." Trace the thought throughout. Why is this side of the King's character indicated

at this stage of the play? How do you account for his praying, "Forgive me my foul murder," while at the same time he is planning another murder?

4. Why does Hamlet forego this opportunity of killing the King? Is it, as he says, that his revenge may be more dreadful? Or is it due to mere irresolution on his part? Or is there another more subtle reason?

5. What effect is produced upon the course of the play by his failure to act?

6. Make an analysis of Hamlet's character as so far revealed. Try to find out his good qualities and those which are not so good.

7. In what respects does this scene advance the movement of the plot?

ACT III

Scene 4

This scene brings up the question of the Queen's complicity in the murder of her husband. But it seems to show (line 30) that she really knew nothing about it, although faithless to him in love. Hamlet upbraids her bitterly for this faithlessness and succeeds in waking her to a sense of her evil doing, though not to repentance. During the rest of the play she is torn between her love for her son and her love for Claudius. Nothing comes of it all: she is unable to save him from the danger of the journey to England nor can she bring about any reconciliation between him and the King.

1. **straight**: at once. **lay home**: speak sharply.

2. **broad**: unrestrained, open.

4. **heat**: the anger of the King. **sconce**: hide, conceal. The "arras" were the tapestry hangings on the walls. They were frequently suspended a foot from the wall, so that there was plenty of room behind them.

11. **idle**: frivolous.

14 **rood**: the Cross.

17. The Queen rises angrily and moves toward the door, but Hamlet intercepts her.

24. Hamlet evidently thinks that the King is concealed behind the arras, and strikes at him on the impulse of the moment. The death of Polonius thus is the first tragic result of his delay.

32. thy better: the King. Hamlet hoped that his vengeance would be quickly accomplished.

33. too busy: too interfering.

37. brassed: hardened it. We say "brazen it out."

38. proof and bulwark against sense: armored and fortified against feeling.

44. sets a blister there: bad women were branded on the forehead.

45. dicers' oaths: the promises of gamblers.

46. the body of contraction: the formal observance of the marriage contract.

49. solidity and compound mass: the solid earth itself.

50. tristful: sad, sorrowful. **doom**: the day of judgment.

51. thought-sick: sick with anxiety.

52. index: preface, prologue.

53. Hamlet here points to two pictures hanging on the wall.

56. front: forehead.

58. station: bearing, attitude, poise of the body.

59. new-lighted: newly alighted.

67. batten: feed grossly, grow fat.

69. hey-day: wildness, wantonness.

71–76. "You must have senses, because you can move; but surely those senses are paralyzed, for madness would not err so, nor was sense ever so controlled by madness but that some degree of choice was left to it to serve in such a difference as between these pictures."

77. cozened you at hoodman blind: cheated you at blindman's buff.

79. sans: without. A French word, at the time used freely. Compare "As You Like It," II. 7. 166:

Sans teeth, sans eyes, sans taste, sans everything.

81. mope: be stupid, incapable of reason.

83. mutine: mutiny.

86. compulsive: compelling, compulsory.

88. reason panders will: reason itself seduces the will.

90. grained: dyed in grain.

91. will not leave their tinct: will not give up their color, will not come out.

96. a vice of kings: a buffoon king, a clown among kings. The "vice" was a stock character in the old plays. Originally representing the bad side of human nature in the Moralities (where the qualities were personified), he eventually came to be a mere fun-maker and was usually represented with a wooden sword — the "dagger of lath" mentioned in "Twelfth Night":

> I'll be with you again
> In a trice,
> Like to the old Vice,
> Your need to sustain;
>
> Who, with dagger of lath,
> In his rage and his wrath,
> Cries, ah, ha! to the devil.

97. cutpurse: sneak thief. The purse, in Shakespeare's time, was worn outside, attached to the girdle.

98. from a shelf: he stole the crown like a petty thief, and had not even the courage to fight for it.

100. shreds and patches: in reference to the parti-colored dress worn by the clown. It may also mean "a patchwork king."

103. The Ghost is invisible to the Queen.

105. lapsed in time and passion: sunk in emotional feeling and blind to the lapse of time.

110. amazement: dismay.

112. conceit: fancy, imagination.

116. with the incorporal air hold discourse: talk to the empty air.

119. bedded: matted. **excrements**: outgrowths. The word was commonly used of the hair and nails.

125. capable: capable of feeling.

126–127. convert My stern effects: change the stern working of my purposes.

128. true color: right character.

133. in his habit as he lived: in his ordinary dress.

136–137. "Madness is very skillful in creating such unreal appearance." The Queen speaks as if to a madman.

137–142. Hamlet, in reply, proposes a practical test to prove his sanity. "My pulse is normal. If you wish to test me, I will repeat word for word what I have said. A madman could not stick to the point."

143. Do not flatter yourself with false comfort. "Flattering unction" literally means an ointment which, while seeming to heal, in reality injures.

146. mining: undermining, eating away.

148. avoid what is to come: avoid sin in the future.

149. compost: manure.

150–153. Forgive my virtuous rebuke — in these easy-going times virtue must bow and truckle to vice for leave to help him.

158. assume: acquire, put on.

159–163. While, on the one hand, custom dulls our souls to the evil of bad actions often performed, yet on the other hand it also builds us up in good courses, and makes the practice of virtue easy. From one point of view custom is a devil; from the other, an angel.

165–166. when you are desirous to be blessed: when you repent and pray for heaven's blessing.

179–187. These lines are meant ironically, and the Queen so understands them.

181. paddock: toad. **gib**: tom-cat.

182. dear concernings: deeply personal matters.

183. the famous ape: in reference to a story now lost. The ape wanted to see if he could fly like the birds, and to test the matter ("to try conclusions") got into the basket himself and jumped off the roof.

191. How did Hamlet know this?

192. concluded: decided on.

196. marshal me to knavery: lead me into danger.

197–198. It 's good sport to have the engineer blown up with his own bomb. " Petar " is defined by a dictionary of the time as " an engine (made like a bell, or mortar) wherewith strong gates are blown open."

202. This man shall set me packing: this man (Polonius) shall set me off in a hurry; or, shall set me to plotting for my own safety. Probably Hamlet intends both senses.

Stage Direction: *dragging in Polonius.* As there was no drop curtain on the Elizabethan stage, it was necessary for the actor in cases such as this to carry off the dead body himself. Hence we have Falstaff, in " King Henry IV," bearing away Harry Percy's body on his back (V. 4. 131). Usually stage directions were given. The following are interesting examples of Shakespeare's way of meeting the problem: " Julius Cæsar," III. 2. 261; " Romeo and Juliet," III. 1. 198; " King Richard II," V. 5. 117; " King Richard III," I. 4. 271; " King Henry IV," V. 4. 160; " King Lear," IV. 6. 278–280. See also the last Stage Direction in " Hamlet."

QUESTIONS AND TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION

1. What should you judge of the relations between Polonius and the Queen from his words to her in the opening passage?

2. Why did Hamlet come to see her?

3. Was the Queen guilty of the death of her first husband? Base your reply upon your knowledge of the action up to this point.

4. I took thee for thy better.

Why does Hamlet try to kill the King now, when he refused the opportunity offered so short a time before?

5. Does Hamlet love his mother? Can you reconcile his love with the harsh words he uses to her?

6. What is the dramatic purpose served by the second appearance of the Ghost to Hamlet? Why is it invisible to the Queen?

7. Does this visitation have any effect upon the after course of the play?

8. Do you note any difference in Hamlet's speeches to his mother after the Ghost's appearance?

9. Hamlet offers a test to prove that he is not mad. What is this test? Does it seem to you a sound one?

10. I must be cruel, only to be kind.

Explain what this means.

11. What is the effect of the interview upon the Queen?

12. How did Hamlet know he was to be sent to England? What plans do you suppose he has in mind in lines 197–200?

ACT IV

Scene 1

The first four scenes of this act are assigned by some scholars to Act III, as has been noted in the Introduction. If this division be made, the Third Act covers the play, the death of Polonius and the departure of Hamlet for England, while the Fourth Act is concerned with the madness of Ophelia, the news of Hamlet's escape and the death of Ophelia.

The first scene is continuous with the last scene of the preceding Act. The Queen is true to her word, and her explanation of Polonius's death shows that she upholds Hamlet's plan of pretended madness.

4. Bestow this place on us a little while: The Queen politely asks that she and the King may be left alone together.

7. Mad as the sea and wind. Compare "King Lear," IV. 4. 1–2:

> Why, he was met even now,
> As mad as the vexed sea.

The Queen evidently does not intend to tell what really happened between her and Hamlet.

11. brainish apprehension: the delusion caused by his madness.

12. heavy: bitterly sad.

13. us: the "royal we."

16. answered: explained.

17. It will be laid to us: we shall be blamed for it. **providence**: care, management.

18. kept short: kept under control. **out of haunt**: away from the haunts of men.

22. divulging: revealing itself.

25. some ore: some vein of precious metal.

26. mineral: mine.

27. he weeps for what is done: Hamlet certainly showed no signs of weeping over Polonius. The Queen is trying to make his deed appear like the act of a real madman.

32. countenance and excuse: take the responsibility of and find an excuse for.

36. speak fair: talk to him carefully (as to a madman).

40–44. "So perhaps slander, whose poisoned shot flies over the wide world as straight as a cannon-ball to its mark, may miss our name and hit the invulnerable air."

QUESTIONS AND TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Do you think this scene should form part of the preceding Act? Give reasons for your reply.

2. Discuss the significance of the Queen's explanation of the death of Polonius.

3. What do you think the King's feelings to be, as judged by what he says?

4. Is the Queen protecting Hamlet?

ACT IV

Scene 2

The attitude of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern has undergone a change. They are barely civil; they regard Hamlet as already in their power. Hamlet, however, still shows himself master of the situation and, in this and the following scene, has a "method in his madness" which the hearers find it difficult to cope with.

6. Compounded it with dust: buried it. Cf.:

When I perhaps compounded am with clay.

— *Sonnet LXXI.*

Compound me with forgotten dust.

— *II Henry IV*, IV. 5. 116.

11. That I can keep your counsel and not mine own: Refer to II. 2. 285. Hamlet has not forgotten the treachery of these two who were once his friends.

12. to be demanded of a sponge: to be questioned by a sponge. **replication**: reply.

27–31. Hamlet here talks nonsense, in his character of madman. At the end of the scene, with the words "Hide fox, and all after," he runs off the stage, leaving the others to follow.

QUESTIONS AND TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Why does Hamlet call Rosencrantz a "sponge"? Is the term appropriate?

2. What evidence do you find, in this and the following scene, that Hamlet is acting the part of a madman?

3. Do you note any change in the attitude of the two courtiers towards Hamlet?

ACT IV

Scene 3

The hypocrisy of the King and his fixed determination to have Hamlet killed are clearly brought out.

3. the strong law: the full power of the law.

4. the distracted multitude: Contemptuous — "the brainless mob." "We must not prosecute him according to law, for the thoughtless common people love him." They base their affection merely on what they can see; and where this occurs the punishment of criminals is considered, but never the crimes for which they are punished. Is this true to-day?

7. To bear all smooth and even: to make everything seem fitting and proper.

9. deliberate pause: a step carefully thought out.

21. a convocation of politic worms: with obvious allusion to Polonius as a politician.

24–25. variable service: a variety of dishes.

26. A hypocritical expression of sorrow, assumed for the benefit of the bystanders.

31. A "progress" was the term for a journey of state.

41. tender: take care of, regard. **dearly**: most heartily.

43. fiery quickness: hot haste.

44. at help: in a favorable quarter.

45. The associates tend: your companions wait for you. **bent**: prepared.

48. We must suppose from this remark that Hamlet has some inkling of the King's plans.

54. at foot: at the heel, closely.

56–57. every thing . . . That else leans on the affair: everything else that has to do with the matter.

58–65. An historical allusion preserved from the original story. The Danes had invaded England and imposed a tribute (Danegeld), which in time had been allowed to lapse. (See III. 1. 169–170.) But in spite of the cessation of the money payment, the English still feared the Danes.

58. at aught: at any value.

59. As my great power . . . sense: as thou hast learned by experience my power to enforce my demands.

61. free awe: respect which needs no compulsion.

62–63. "Thou mayest not treat with indifference the procedure which we lay upon thee."

63. imports: signifies.

64. conjuring: urging.

65. present: instant, immediate.

66. hectic: fever.

68. haps: fortune.

QUESTIONS AND TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION

1. In his opening words, is the King speaking to himself, or does he mean his remarks for his attendants? Compare carefully the closing lines of the scene.

2. Does Hamlet suspect the purposes of the King in sending him to England? What does he mean when he says: "I see a cherub that sees them"?

3. The King says that Hamlet is "loved of the distracted multitude." What qualities does Hamlet possess that would endear him to the people?

4. The action of the play begins to move more rapidly in Scenes 2 and 3. Explain how this is managed.

ACT IV

Scene 4

Fortinbras, the man of action, here appears momentarily on his way to Poland. At the end of the play he returns "in conquest come from Poland." Hamlet perceives the contrast between his own indecision and the strong, practical character of Fortinbras.

2. license: permission.

3. craves the conveyance: asks for leave to proceed. For the "promise," see II. 2. 76–80.

6. in his eye: in his presence.

8. softly: slowly, gently.

9. powers: forces.

11. purposed: intended.

15. the main of Poland: the country as a whole.

17. with no addition: with no beating about the bush.

20. "I would not take the lease of it for as low a rent as five ducats."

22. ranker: richer. **sold in fee**: sold for absolute possession.

25–26. "Two thousand men and twenty thousand ducats are not enough to settle this little question."

27. the imposthume of much wealth and peace: the internal abscess caused by too much ease of life.

32–66. This soliloquy shows Hamlet's keen self-analysis, as well as his habit of indulging in speculation. It shows, too,

that he envies those who have practical energy in working their plans out as deeds.

34. chief good and market of his time: the principal end and aim of his existence, the business in which he employs his time.

36. such large discourse: such range of intellect.

37. looking before and after: able to conjecture the future, as well as to remember the past.

39. fust: grow stale.

40. bestial oblivion: the forgetfulness characteristic of a mere animal.

40–41. some craven scruple Of thinking too precisely on the event: some cowardly hesitation which results from thinking too particularly about what is going to happen. Hamlet thoroughly understands his own weakness.

46. gross: large, obvious.

47. mass and charge: size and expense.

48. a delicate and tender prince: carefully educated and still in his early youth.

54. argument: reason, occasion.

61. "Led on by a vision of fame which is a mere fantasy that tricks the senses."

62. plot: piece of ground.

63–65. "Which is too small to give the soldiers room to fight in: too small even to hold the bodies of the dead." **continent**: holder, container.

QUESTIONS AND TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Why is Fortinbras introduced at this stage of the play?

2. To what previous scene do the events here portrayed point back?

3. Show how the character of Hamlet is brought out by contrast.

4. Make an abstract of the soliloquy, lines 32–66. In what respects does it resemble the other soliloquy, beginning, "To be, or not to be, that is the question"? Can you form an estimate of Hamlet's character from the two speeches?

5. Has Hamlet worked out any definite plan of action at the end of this scene? If not, what do you take to be his frame of mind?

ACT IV

Scene 5

This is the scene which has been suggested as the beginning of the Fourth Act. The reason for Ophelia's madness is the death of her father, but the apparent insanity of Hamlet and his cruelty to her must have been a contributing cause. Her mind was weak and yielding, as is readily seen in the placid manner in which she agrees to take a part in the treacherous plans of the crafty old Polonius. The scene itself is marked by extreme pathos; it shows one of the dreadful irrevocable situations which Shakespeare always develops in so masterly a way. Note, too, the dramatic contrast between this pathetic real madness and the assumed bitter madness of Hamlet.

Laertes returns from France, having heard of his father's death, and is easily turned by the King (in this scene and Scene 7) to a murderous plot against Hamlet. He is a youth of high spirit, but no match for the craft of the King.

1. These first words of the Queen are to be taken as part of a conversation which was begun off stage. She has been laboring under a severe nervous strain since the conversation with Hamlet, and does not feel equal to meeting the daughter of the murdered Polonius. Hence her remark: "I will not speak with her."

2. importunate: insistent, determined. **distract**: distraught, distracted.

6. Spurns enviously at straws: In her madness she conceives hatred for the most trivial things.

7–9. her speech . . . collection: Her speech has no sense, yet its very disjointedness leads people to try to put it together and get some meaning out of it.

9. aim: guess.

10. botch the words up fit: Put the words together anyhow to make them tally with their own thoughts.

11–13. Perhaps this cautious gentleman is afraid of saying something which ought not to be said. The intended mean-

ing is: "Her words and gestures lead one to infer that some great misfortune has befallen her."

14–15. This cold and calculating remark does not sound like the frank Horatio. Perhaps he is circumspect in the presence of the Queen.

18. Each toy seems prologue to some great amiss: Every trifle seems prelude to some great disaster.

19. artless jealousy: suspicion that has not the art to conceal itself: "Guilt is so preoccupied with suspicion that it fails to guard against betraying itself."

23. The music of Ophelia's songs has been handed down by tradition in practically the same form as used in Shakespeare's day. It is folly to look for any meaning in these pathetic utterances — though the commentators have tried to explain what she says. She speaks of death and she speaks of love, but in her lost mind there is no reason or congruity. As to the matter of the songs, it consists of half-remembered ballads heard, perhaps, in childhood.

25. cockle hat and staff: the dress of a pilgrim. A "cockle hat" was a hat with a scallop shell stuck in it to show that the wearer had been on pilgrimage.

26. shoon: old plural form for "shoes."

37. larded: decked, garnished.

40. Even the wicked King is affected.

41. God 'ild you: God reward you.

41–42. They say the owl was a baker's daughter: a reference to an old Gloucestershire tale — how our Saviour, asking for bread, was rudely received by the baker's daughter, whom he punished by changing her into an owl. The words that follow are suggested by the recollection of the story.

44. Conceit upon her father: "Thinking of her father has caused this."

61–62. "Misfortunes never come singly."

64. remove: removal.

64–65. muddied, Thick and unwholesome: stirred up and yielding to ugly rumors about the death of Polonius.

66. greenly: foolishly, as in experienced people might do.

67. In hugger-mugger to inter him: to bury him secretly and in haste.

70. as much containing: as important.

72. keeps himself in clouds: keeps secret his intentions.

73. wants not buzzers: has no lack of whisperers.

75. "These buzzers of evil speeches, although there is no ground of truth, will not hesitate to accuse us in every ear they meet."

78. murdering-piece: a small cannon loaded with bullets, which scattered when fired.

80. my Switzers: my personal bodyguard of Swiss soldiers. The King used hired foreign soldiers ("mercenaries") for his personal protection. The custom was common throughout Europe at the time, the theory being that a foreign body of troops paid directly by the King would be more reliable than native soldiers in the event of rebellion or mob violence. The French king first employed Scottish archers (see Scott's "Quentin Durward"); these were succeeded by the Swiss Guard, which lasted through the Revolution of 1789. When the royal palace of the Tuileries was stormed by the mob the Swiss Guard were true to their trust and stayed at their post until every man was killed. A survival of the old custom is seen to-day in the Swiss bodyguard of the Pope.

93. this is counter: Hunting dogs are said to "run counter" when they follow a false scent.

95. this king: Note the scorn of the phrase.

105. do not fear our person: do not fear for me. The Queen has thrown herself between Laertes and the King.

106. hedge: protect, encompass.

112. his fill: to his heart's content, as much as he likes.

113–119. The vigor of Laertes is in strong contrast to the vacillation of Hamlet. But the King, while seeming to meet his wrath fairly, guides it very skillfuly according to his own devices.

117. "I don't care for this world or the world to come."

119. throughly: thoroughly. **stay**: stop.

120. "My own will and nothing else."

121. husband: manage.

125. " Is your revenge to be like a gambler's sweepstakes, and draw everything from the board? Are you determined to involve both friend and foe in your revenge?"

129. life-rendering pelican: an allusion to the old belief that the pelican fed its young with its own blood.

130. repast: feed.

133. sensibly: feelingly, keenly.

138. sense and virtue: feeling and power.

140. rose: See III. 1. 152, III. 4. 42.

144–145. fine: delicate, tender. **instance**: proof, example. Ophelia's sanity had followed her father to the grave.

148. Hey non nonny: refrains without meaning, such as were common in the ballads of Shakespeare's day.

155. O, how the wheel becomes it! This has never been satisfactorily explained. Perhaps these are old-fashioned ballads which Ophelia has heard as a child to the hum of her nurse's spinning-wheel.

157. This nothing's more than matter: Her meaningless little songs are more pitiful than any sense could be.

158. rosemary: See " The Winter's Tale," IV. 3. 74–76:

> For you there 's rosemary and rue, these keep
> Seeming and savor all the winter long:
> Grace and remembrance be to you both!

159. pansies: From the French *pensées*. Rosemary and pansies are given to Laertes.

160. " A lesson in wisdom by a witless person."

162. There 's fennel for you and columbines: the one for flattery the other for faithlessness. These to the King.

163. there 's rue for you: She gives rue to the Queen; it was for repentance.

164. you must wear your rue with a difference: " Difference " was a term in heraldry meaning the slight change in a coat of arms made to distinguish one branch of a family from another. Ophelia means that she and the Queen had different causes of " ruth." " For you it signifies repentance, for me only regret."

165. There 's a daisy: The daisy was for deceit. She gives it to the Queen.

165–166. I would give you some violets: The flower stood for faithfulness. Probably spoken to Horatio.

168. bonny sweet Robin: from an old Elizabethan ballad.

170. favor: charm.

183. commune with: share.

185. "Make choice of any of your wisest friends you like."

187. collateral: indirect. "Directly or indirectly."

188. touched: implicated. The King is sure of himself and bends all his energies to stir Laertes against Hamlet. It is, indeed, an excellent opportunity for him.

194. means of death: cause of his death.

195. hatchment: The coat of arms hung over the tomb of a dead knight.

196. noble rite: rites fitting for a nobleman. **formal ostentation**: funeral observance according to proper form.

QUESTIONS AND TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Why does the Queen at first refuse to speak with Ophelia? Why does she finally consent to see her?

2. Trace the causes that led to the madness of Ophelia. Are they reflected in what she says?

3. When sorrows come, they come not single spies,
But in battalions.

Comment upon these words. Are they true? Do they remind you of any proverb?

4. Show how, at this stage of the action, Fate seems to be moving against the King.

5. What dramatic purpose is served by the appearance of Laertes?

6. What remark shows the Queen's loyalty to the King?

7. Point out the contrast here afforded between the characters of Laertes and Hamlet.

8. What new light is thrown upon the King's character when Laertes bursts in on him at the head of the mob?

ACT IV

Scene 6

This scene keeps us in touch with Hamlet's affairs. The action is practically continuous with the scenes that precede and follow.

6–11. Shakespeare's touch is always sure. Note here, how even in the minor character of the sailor, the bluff, straightforward speech is characteristic.

11. let to know: given to understand.

13. means to the king: means of access.

15. appointment: equipment.

16–17. we put on a compelled valor: we fought because we had to.

19. thieves of mercy: merciful thieves.

20. they knew what they did: probably Hamlet found means to bribe the pirates.

24–25. much too light for the bore of the matter: words are too feeble to express the seriousness of my news. They are like small shot in a gun of large calibre.

QUESTIONS AND TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION

1. What caused the failure of the King's plot against the life of Hamlet?

2. What do you suppose to be the "good turn" which Hamlet says he will do for the pirates?

3. What is the real purpose of this scene?

ACT IV

Scene 7

The dramatic structure of this scene is very interesting. We first see the King carefully feeling his way with Laertes and hinting at revenge for his father's death. Suddenly comes the news of Hamlet's return and there is need for instant action. With only a momentary hesitation, the King moves straight to

the point, and outlines a plan whereby both shall be satisfied — Laertes in his revenge and the King himself in his hatred. Laertes falls readily into the snare. He has a naturally hot temper and his sense of honor and fair play has been undermined by his life in France (see II. 1). We are not surprised to find him willing not only to obtain a fatal advantage over Hamlet, but even to "anoint" his sword to make assurance doubly sure. To this the King adds the idea of the "poisoned chalice." Then comes the news of Ophelia's death. The Queen is deeply affected, Laertes is broken-hearted; but to the King it is merely an incident which may upset his careful plans. In this spirit he hurries after Laertes.

1. conscience: knowledge, understanding. **my acquittance seal**: certify that I am free from guilt. The King has told Laertes about his father's death at the hands of Hamlet.

10. unsinewed: weak, nerveless.

13. be it either which: whichever of the two it be.

15. in his sphere: A reference to Ptolemaic system of astronomy, generally held in Shakespeare's day. According to this system, the universe was composed of ten hollow spheres, one within another. The first seven of these spheres contained the seven planets; the eighth, the fixed stars. Outside were the "Crystalline Sphere" and the "Primum Mobile." Shakespeare's plays contain many allusions to the spheres.

17. to a public count: to a public lawsuit.

18. general gender: common people.

20. Several of these springs were known in England at this time.

21. Convert his gyves to graces: change his fetters into badges of honor. They would like him all the better for his chains.

22. Too slightly timbered: made of too light wood.

26. desperate terms: "desperate straits."

27. if praises may go back again: if I may praise what she used to be.

28. challenger on mount: read as if a compound noun.

33. You shortly shall hear more: The King expects soon to learn of the success of his plot against Hamlet. Just at this moment, however, by the irony of fate, news comes of Hamlet's escape.

43–47. The flippant tone of the letter is worthy of note. **naked**: unarmed.

50. abuse: delusion, cheat.

51. character: handwriting. For the moment the King is utterly at a loss. "Can you advise me?"

58. As how should it be so? how otherwise? Spoken very deliberately, with long pauses. The speaker is studying the mystery. His whole scheme has to be reorganized, and his next words show that a new plan has already occurred to him.

62. checking at his voyage: giving it up for something else. The term is taken from the sport of falconry, where a hawk was said to "check" when she left the game she was flown at to pursue some other bird.

64. ripe in my device: ready in my mind. The King has made his plan.

67. uncharge the practice: make no accusation against the plot.

70. organ: instrument. **falls**: happens.

73. parts: qualities, attainments.

76. unworthiest siege: least worthy rank.

80. sables: sober garments. **weeds**: robes.

81. importing health and graveness: denoting well-being and gravity.

84. can well: can do well.

85. had witchcraft in 't: in his horsemanship.

87–88. As he had been incorpsed and demi-natured With the brave beast: "As if he had been one with it in body, and half in mind as well."

88–90. "His figures and tricks went beyond all that my imagination could invent."

93. brooch: Brooches were at one time worn in the cap, and hence were very conspicuous.

95. He made confession of you: He told about you. "Confession," because Lamond would be reluctant to admit that Laertes was superior to his own countrymen

96. a masterly report: a report of Laertes as a master of fencing.

100. scrimers: fencers.

105. play with him: engage in a friendly fencing-match. Hamlet is not merely a dreamer and thinker; he has athletic tastes, and the King proposes to utilize these to bring about his death. The somewhat lengthy speeches of the King will repay careful reading. He first praises Lamond, then subtly flatters Laertes and finally suggests the possibility of his meeting Hamlet.

106. A significant pause on the King's part. Bad as he is, he hesitates before actually suggesting deliberate and treacherous murder. Note how carefully he unfolds his plan.

110. "I don't think you didn't love your father; but, after all, love is a thing of time — it does not last forever, as I can see in occurrences that prove what I say." The King skillfully hints that Laertes' affection for his father is not so keen as it used to be — nothing remains always at its height. If we wish to do a thing, we ought to do it at once; for the intention is changed by all sorts of delays or accidents, and then the regretful "I should have done it" is all that is left. "Hamlet is coming back," he concludes. "What would you do if you really loved your father?"

111. love is begun by time: love is measured by time.

112. in passages of proof: occurrences that prove what I say.

116. nothing is at a like goodness still: nothing remains constantly at the same degree of excellence.

117. plurisy: excess, plethora. A mistaken use of the word, not infrequent in dramatists of the time.

122. spendthrift sigh, That hurts by easing: The old idea was that every sigh caused a loss of blood, and hurt the vital powers. "The mere recognition of a duty without the will to perform it, while it satisfies for the moment, really enfeebles the moral nature!"

127. No place, indeed, should murder sanctuarize: No place should give protection to a murderer (like Hamlet). In those days a criminal might "take sanctuary", *i.e.*, take refuge in a church. He was then immune from capture or punishment.

133. in fine: at last.

134. remiss: careless, indifferent.

135. contriving: plotting.

136. peruse: examine.

138. unbated: not blunted, without the button on the point, as always used in friendly bouts. **a pass of practice**: a treacherous thrust.

141. an unction from a mountebank: an ointment from a quack doctor. "Mountebank" is from the Italian *montambanco*, a "mount-on-bench," the bench being the platform from which the quack doctor spoke.

142. mortal: deadly.

143. cataplasm: plaster.

144. simples: herbs. **virtue**: healing virtue.

150. fit us to our shape: enable us to act our proposed part.

151–152. "If our intention shows because of our bad performance it would be better not to try it."

154. blast in proof: like a cannon which bursts upon being tested.

155. your cunnings: your respective skills.

156. I ha 't: I have it! The completion of this treacherous plan suddenly flashes into the King's mind.

158. As: and so, for so.

160. A chalice for the nonce: a cup for the special occasion.

161. stuck: thrust, stroke.

166. aslant: across.

167. hoar leaves: referring to the silver-gray underside of willow-leaves.

169. crow-flowers: buttercups. **long purples**: the early *purple orchis* which blossoms in April and May.

172. coronet weeds: crown of flowers.

173. sliver: a branch "slivered," or stripped off.

178. incapable: insensible, unable to realize.

179. indued: suited.

187. trick: habit.

189. The woman will be out: The womanish weakness in me will be over.

191. douts: puts out, extinguishes.

QUESTIONS AND TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION

1. In this scene the King meets with two unexpected reverses. Explain what these are, and show how the King adjusts his plans to the changed conditions.

2. What can you say about the tone of Hamlet's letter?

3. Trace the steps by which the King unfolds his plan to Laertes. Why is he so slow in coming to the point?

4. Analyze the characters of the two men, as revealed in Scenes 6 and 7. Which appears to you to be the more treacherous?

5. The Queen describes Ophelia's death in a passage of great poetic beauty. What advantage is gained here by this method of description?

6. What tragic occurrences have so far taken place? Show how they rise inevitably from the conditions of the play.

ACT V

Scene 1

The first part of this scene serves to afford "dramatic relief" after the intense emotion of the last Act. The conversation between the Clowns is an excellent example of Shakespeare's power of portraying the uneducated mind; First Clown rather fancies himself as a witty fellow, and his dialogue with Hamlet is a little masterpiece. The moralizing of Hamlet carries forward the action to the solemnity of Ophelia's burial and the horror of the fight in the grave.

4. straight: at once, right away. **crowner**: coroner. The finding of the coroner was that Ophelia should not be treated as a suicide, but should have ordinary Christian burial.

8. 't is found so: by the coroner's jury.

9. 'se offendendo': clown Latin for "se defendendo," in self-defense.

11. an act hath three branches: legal phraseology filtered through the Clown's wit.

12. argal: *Ergo*, "therefore," is the word meant.

14. delver: digger.

22. crowner's quest: coroner's inquest.

25. out o' Christian burial: without the rites of the Church.

26. there thou say'st: there you 're right, "you said it."

27. countenance: favor, encouragement.

28. even Christian: fellow Christian.

30. hold up: maintain.

39–40. confess thyself—Go to: First Clown was going to say: "Confess thyself and be hanged," but Second Clown interrupts him with: "Ah, get out!"

52. unyoke: equivalent to "consider your day's work done."

59. doomsday: the day of Judgment, when the graves give up their dead. See Revelation xx. 12: "I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God."

60. Yaughan: probably the name of an ale-house keeper near the Globe Theatre. The audience would be delighted with the local touch. **stoup**: cup.

61. The verses that the Clown sings are confused memories of a song called *The Aged Lover Renounceth Love*, from a popular collection called Tottell's *Miscellany* (1557). The "O" and "ah" are grunts as he throws up the earth with his shovel.

67. "Habit has made it easy to him—a sort of second nature." "Habit has made it natural to him to take his employment easily."

73. intil the land: into the earth.

76. jowls. bumps, throws carelessly.

78. politician: plotter, schemer. Always used by Shakespeare in this sense. **o'erreaches**: outwits.

79. circumvent: cheat.

87. chapless: jawless. **mazzard**: a slang term for the head. Literally: "goblet."

88. trick: skill, faculty, art.

90. loggats: a game somewhat resembling bowls, but played on a floor instead of a green. The loggats themselves were pear-shaped pieces of wood, about twenty-seven inches long, which were thrown at a "jack."

95. Hamlet's speech over the skull of the lawyer is full of technical law terms. How does it happen that a Prince of Denmark is so familiar with legal phraseology?

96. quiddities: fine-drawn distinctions.

97. quillets: quibbles.

99. sconce: head — another bit of slang.

100–102. All these terms relate to the purchase or ownership of land.

103–104. "Is this the end (*finis*, finish) of his fines, and the recovery of his recoveries, to have his fine-distinguishing head full of fine dirt?"

106. a pair of indentures: Indentures always went in pairs. An indenture was a compact or agreement written in duplicate on the same sheet of paper. The paper (or parchment) was cut in two along a crooked or "indented" line, so that the fitting together of the parts would prove that both were genuine in case of dispute.

107–108. The very conveyances of his lands will hardly lie in this box: the very deeds of his lands are almost too bulky for this grave. **inheritor**: possessor.

113. assurance: security — with a play upon the legal meaning of the word. "They are fools who strive by such means to make the ownership of property secure against death."

125. the quick: the living.

136. absolute: positive, dogmatic, precise.

136–137. speak by the card, or equivocation will undo us: speak carefully, lest the double meaning of words cause us to be completely misunderstood. The "card" was the chart used on ship-board, and was, of course, marked out very exactly.

139. picked: smart, affected.

140. kibe: chilblain, or sore on the heel.

160–161. I have been sexton here, man and boy, thirty years: This passage, together with the Clown's remark that he became sexton on the very day of Hamlet's birth, gives a perfectly definite age for Hamlet in the play. A good deal has been written on the subject — some critics would make him much younger than is indicated here. But it would seem that Shakespeare

has clearly settled the matter by three references in this scene — the two just mentioned, and the later remark about Yorick (line 172).

170. Note the colloquial use of "your."

179. Rhenish: red wine.

204. curiously: fancifully.

205–206. "To follow him thither would be quite a reasonable inquiry, along the lines of probability."

208. loam: clay.

211. imperious: imperial.

214. flaw: gust of wind.

216. who is this they follow? Hamlet knows nothing of the fate of Ophelia; the situation is not clear to him. He looks on with only a general interest until Laertes mentions "my sister." Then he cries out in heart-broken fashion: "What, the fair Ophelia!"

217. maimed: imperfect, curtailed.

219. Fordo: destroy. **estate**: rank.

220. Couch we awhile: let us hide for a moment.

223. A very noble youth: Hamlet has no quarrel with Laertes and is ignorant of any wrong done to Ophelia.

224. enlarged: extended as far as we have permission to go. Ophelia has some form of funeral service, though not the complete one.

226. but that great command o'ersways the order: "had not the King compelled us to override the rule of the Church which forbids Christian burial to suicides."

227. ground unsanctified: outside the sacred precincts of the graveyard.

230. crants: garlands carried before a maiden's coffin. **strewments**: the strewing of flowers upon her.

231–232. the bringing home Of bell and burial: the bringing of the dead maiden to her last home with bell and burial.

235. requiem: hymn for the dead. **peace-parted souls**: souls that have departed in peace.

238. churlish: harsh, rude.

246. ingenious: intelligent, keen.

251–252. Pelion, Olympus were mountains in Thessaly, familiar in mythology.

254. the wandering stars: the planets.

259. splenitive: hot-tempered.

265. wag: move.

267–268. For the moment Hamlet forgets everything except his love for Ophelia. The shock of his grief leads to the "wild and whirling words" of the next few lines. But he recovers himself with the scornful—"Nay, an thou 'lt mouth, I 'll rant as well as thou." And he shows (in lines 286–288) that he is puzzled and deeply hurt by Laertes' attitude.

271. forbear: bear with him.

273. woo 't: wilt thou.

274. eisel: vinegar.

285. golden couplets: when her two young ones with their golden down upon them are hatched. "Couplets," because pigeons lay only two eggs at a time.

286–288. Note the pathos of the lines. Laertes was a friend whom Hamlet loved and might have hoped to keep, "but 't is no matter." The fatalism of this phrase is borne out in the two succeeding lines: "things have their appointed course; we have no power to divert it."

293. We 'll put the matter to the present push: We 'll get to work at once and decide the matter.

295. living monument: everlasting monument. He hints also at the impending sacrifice of Hamlet.

QUESTIONS AND TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION

1. What is the object of introducing the two Clowns at this point? Does their conversation add anything to the play?

2. Discuss the "emotional content" of this scene, noting particularly the shift in dramatic appeal.

3. What is a "crowner's quest"?

4. Can you assign definite reasons for the appearance of Hamlet and Horatio?

5. Is any new side of Hamlet's character brought out in his conversation with Horatio? Answer fully.

6. What facts can be gleaned in this Act, as well as in other Acts, as to Hamlet's age? See, for example, I. 3. 124; II. 2. 10–14; V. 1. 144–161.

7. Explain why Ophelia was buried with "maimed rites."

8. When did Hamlet first learn of Ophelia's death?

9.

> I tell thee, churlish priest,
> A ministering angel shall my sister be,
> When thou liest howling.

Explain this passage.

10. Why does Hamlet declare his love for Ophelia? Compare III. 1. 116–120.

11. What are his feelings towards Laertes? See lines 221–222 and 252–290.

ACT V

Scene 2

The early portion of this remarkable scene gives us the necessary information about Hamlet's experiences on his uncompleted voyage to England. We then see another side of his character in the interview with the foppish Osric. This lighter moment, however, merges into the terrible gloom of the close — a gloom which is heightened by the tragic pathos of Hamlet's remark: "Thou wouldst not think how ill all 's here about my heart: but it is no matter." None the less, at the end we note the dawn of a brighter day for Denmark in the coming of young Fortinbras — the man of sane and rational action and feeling.

1. The scene opens — as often in the plays — with the speakers in the midst of a conversation.

6. mutines in the bilboes: mutineers in fetters. Bilboes were stocks or fetters used on ship-board, made of an iron bar with rings attached in which the prisoners' legs were set. The word is derived from Bilbao in Spain, long famous for its iron and steel.

7. know: acknowledge, recognize. The lines 7–11 are parenthetical, and might be set off by parentheses.

9. pall: lose vigor, turn stale.

10–11. A famous passage. "Rough-hew" means to make the first, or rough, cast of any piece of work.

13. My sea-gown scarfed about me: my boat-cloak thrown loosely around my shoulders.

21. importing: seriously concerning. **health**: welfare.

22. such bugs and goblins in my life: such dreadful consequences to follow if I remained alive. "Bugs" were bugbears, objects of terror.

23. on the supervise, no leisure bated: on the first glance through the letter, with no intermission whatever.

31. they: *i.e.*, the brains. His mind began to work at once.

32. fair: neatly.

33. statists: statesmen.

34. A baseness to write fair: "Most of the great men of Shakespeare's time, whose autographs have been preserved, wrote very bad hands; their secretaries very good ones."

36. yeoman's service: good, faithful service, such as was rendered in war by the yeomen who made up the mass of the army. See "Henry V," III. 1. 25 ff.:

> And you, good yeomen,
> Whose limbs were made in England, show us here
> The mettle of your pasture.

37. Conjuration: admonition.

38. tributary: another reference to the Danegeld. See note, page 324.

42. stand a comma 'tween their amities: a link of affection between them. The comma, as opposed to the period, is used as a sign of connection, not separation.

46. sudden: unprepared.

47. shriving time: time to confess their sins and receive forgiveness.

48. ordinant: guiding, ruling.

49. signet: signet-ring.

50. model: exact copy.

54. sequent: following.

56. go to 't: go to their death. Almost equivalent to our modern slang: "Get theirs."

58–59. "I feel no compunction on their account; they brought their destruction (defeat) upon themselves by worming their way into my affairs."

60–62. "Between the thrusting blades and deadly furious points of mighty opponents."

62. Horatio's remark bursts from him as he comes to the end of the commission which Hamlet gave him to read.

63. Does it not . . . stand me now upon? Is it not incumbent upon me?

65. Popped in between the election and my hopes: cut me out of being king, as I had hoped to be. One of the very few references made by Hamlet to his loss through the usurpation of his uncle.

66. "Plotted against my very life." **angle**: fishing-tackle.

67. cozenage: deceit, treachery.

68. quit him: requite him, pay him back.

69. canker: destructive element.

70. In: into.

71–74. Horatio suggests that the King will soon learn about the death of his two messengers. In reply, Hamlet grimly hints that in any case there will be time enough to accomplish his business Note the force of the quiet words: "the interim is mine."

75. Hamlet's generous regret for his harshness towards Laertes throws into darker shadow the treachery of Laertes and the King.

78. court his favors: try to win his friendship.

79. the bravery of his grief: the loud and extravagant display of his sorrow.

84. water-fly: "A water-fly skips up and down upon the surface of the water without any apparent purpose or reason, and hence is the proper emblem of a busy trifler." (Johnson.) Osric is a type of the empty-headed courtier, the idle man-about-town. Hamlet converses with him in his own vein, while Horatio stands by much amused. The interruption doubtless

comes as a relief to the two friends. In the whole passage Shakespeare ridicules a form of the affected speech of the day, which was known as "Euphuism." Other parodies are found in "Love's Labour's Lost" and "All's Well That Ends Well."

89. chough: According to a dictionary of Shakespeare's day, a "chough" was "a boor, lobcock, lozell; one that is fitter to feed with cattle than to converse with men."

96. Hamlet amuses himself with Osric's shallow inconsistency. Compare III. 2 351–357.

100. complexion: temperament, disposition.

108. absolute: perfect, faultless. **most excellent differences**: a most distinguished person.

109. very soft society and great showing: of perfect breeding and elegant manners.

110. feelingly: with insight. **the card or calendar of gentry**: "the general preceptor of elegance; the card by which a gentleman is to direct his course; the calendar by which he is to choose his time, that what he does may be both excellent and seasonable." (Johnson.)

111–112. Laertes comprises in himself, like a complete map, every accomplishment which a gentleman should look for.

113. his definement suffers no perdition in you: his definition loses nothing in your mouth.

113–120. Hamlet parodies the affected speech of Osric and succeeds in beating him in his own language. Osric becomes confused, perhaps conscious that Hamlet is making fun of him, but unable to answer in kind. The general meaning of Hamlet's extravagant remarks is clearer to us than it was to the bewildered courtier.

114. to divide him inventorially . . . his quick sail: "To try to make an inventory of his qualities and add them up would dizzy the memory, and yet this would be so far from keeping pace with his qualities that it would seem merely to roll about (yaw) in comparison with such a fast sailer as he is."

116. in the verity of extolment: to praise him truly.

117. of great article: *i.e.*, it takes a great many items to make up the list of his perfections.

117–118. infusion of such dearth and rareness: natural character so scarce and rare.

119–120. his semblable is his mirror . . . nothing more: nothing shows anything like him except his looking-glass. Anyone who tries to follow him is merely his shadow.

122–123. "How does this concern us? Why do we mention this cultured gentleman with our uncultured tongues?"

125–126. Horatio taunts Osric with not understanding his own language when another man speaks it. "Try hard," he adds. "You 'll do it in time."

127. "What is your idea in naming this gentleman?"

135. approve me: commend me.

140–143. "In the opinion of the people of the court, he gets more praise than anybody else."

148. imponed: staked, "put up."

149. assigns: appendages, belongings.

150. hangers: the straps that attach the sword to the girdle.

152. liberal conceit: elaborate design.

154–155. "I knew you would have to consult the notes." Explanatory notes used to be printed in the margin (margent).

157. german: akin, appropriate.

163–167. As far as can be seen from Osric's rather confused statement, it would seem that the King's Barbary horses are to go to Laertes if he makes twelve hits before Hamlet makes nine; but that Hamlet, to get the French swords has only to make nine hits before Laertes makes twelve.

167–168. By "answer" Osric means "encounter." Hamlet makes a punning reply.

172. the breathing-time of day: the time for exercise and relaxation.

176. re-deliver: report.

180. Hamlet is becoming impatient with Osric's affectations. "Yours, yours" is his curt rejoinder to the young courtier's elaborate farewell.

182. lapwing: young lapwings were said to be in such haste to be hatched that they ran away with the shell on their heads. The word is used of a forward, conceited fellow.

183. " He was a courtier in his cradle."

185. drossy: mixed with impurities, worthless.

186. got the tune of the time and outward habit of encounter: learned fine speech enough to be able to talk superficially in the fashionable style.

186–189. " A kind of frothy and superficial knowledge, gathered in fragments, which causes them to take up the most foolish and empty opinions: and they are such bubbles that if you but blow them, they burst."

190. commended him: commended himself.

193. to play: *i.e.*, to fence.

198. In happy time. " Good ! "

203. at the odds: with the advantage given me.

205–206. Here, and in the conversation that follows, Hamlet has some sad presentiment of evil to come. Note Horatio's immediate eager and kindly offer of help.

208. gaingiving: misgiving, uneasiness.

211. forestall their repair: prevent their approach.

212. augury: forebodings.

212–213. there 's a special providence in the fall of a sparrow: See Matthew x. 21: " Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? and one of them shall not fall to the ground without your Father." The whole speech is fatalistic and thoroughly in keeping with the character of Hamlet.

213–217. " If death is to come now, it will not come in the future; if it is to come in the future, it will not come now; in any case, it will come some time; to be ready for it when it does come, that 's everything. Since we can take nothing with us when we leave this world, what does it matter when we leave? "

219–237. Hamlet has always liked Laertes and makes a handsome apology.

221. this presence: those here present.

224. exception: objection. We still say " to take exception " to a thing.

234. " My denial of any intentional wrong to you."

237–244. The reply of Laertes seems somewhat stilted and insincere after the frank avowal of Hamlet.

242. a voice and precedent of peace: an opinion and precedent which will justify me in making peace.

243. ungored: unwounded.

248. foil: used with play upon its two senses: (1) blunted rapier, and (2) gold-leaf used to set off a jewel.

256. he is bettered: he has the better reputation.

258. have all a length: are all the same length.

260. stoups of wine: cups of wine.

262. quit in answer of the third exchange: pay off Laertes in the third bout for any hit received in the first or second.

265. union: an especially fine pearl.

268. kettle: kettle-drum.

273. *They play*: Laertes is using an "unbated foil"—a foil with the protective button removed from the point and one which in addition is poisoned. He must be careful not to touch Hamlet too soon. The King attempts to make Hamlet drink the poisoned wine, but Hamlet twice refuses. Thereupon Laertes decides to do his part; though with some slight compunction because of his adversary's friendliness and courtesy as well as his complete ignorance of any treachery. The athlete in Laertes revolts against foul play towards one who is bearing himself so skillfully in fair fight.

275. this pearl is thine: The King poisons the wine; probably by dissolving a false pearl with poison inside it.

280. fat, and scant of breath: "Fat" may mean merely "out of training." It is said, however, that these words were inserted to suit the person of Richard Burbage, the actor who first played the part.

281. napkin: handkerchief.

290. dally: waste time.

292. you make a wanton of me: you are merely playing with me, you trifle with me as if I were a child.

They change rapiers: There are three ways in which this action may be carried out. (1) Laertes tries to disarm Hamlet by seizing the hilt of his sword at close quarters. Hamlet does the same, and the two exchange weapons. (2) Both swords are knocked out of their hands, and in the confusion each picks

up his opponent's. (3) Laertes drops his sword; Hamlet puts his foot on it and offers his own and then picks up the other. The last is the method followed by several of the best actors.

299. as a woodcock to mine own springe: like a decoy caught in my own trap. Woodcocks were used as decoys and occasionally got caught in the snare themselves.

310. practice: plot, artifice.

321. tempered: compounded, mixed.

327. chance: occurrence.

328. mutes or audience to this act: dumb actors or dumb spectators.

329. fell sergeant: cruel sheriff's officer.

333–335. Horatio is about to drink off the poison, that he may die with Hamlet. But Hamlet tells him he must live and deliver the truth about all that has happened.

345. Absent thee from felicity awhile: "Felicity" means the felicity of death — the "consummation devoutly to be wished."

346. o'ercrows: triumphs over.

349. dying voice: vote, opinion.

350. the occurrents . . . Which have solicited: the events which have prompted me to give him my dying voice.

351. The rest is silence. "Shakespeare's supreme touch is here."

357. This quarry cries on havoc: this pile of dead cries out for merciless revenge.

358. toward: at hand, about to take place.

360. dismal: always a strong word in Shakespearian usage.

365. his mouth: *i.e.*, the King's.

368. jump upon: exactly in time for.

374. Reference is made in this line to the murder of Hamlet's father; in the next to the death of Polonius, and in line 378 to the execution of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern. **put on**: instigated. **forced cause**: Hamlet was forced to bring about their death.

377. in this upshot: in this conclusion of the tragedy. The "upshot" in archery was the final shot, which decided the match.

382. rights of memory: rights which are still in people's memory.

383. vantage: favorable opportunity.

385. whose voice will draw on more: whose opinion (Hamlet's) will bring others forward in support.

388. on: in consequence of.

390. put on: put to the test, given opportunity.

391. passage: death, departure.

QUESTIONS AND TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION

1. What is the meaning of Hamlet's opening speech? The significance of Horatio's reply?

2. Explain the plan which Hamlet made to frustrate the schemes of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern. Write the letter described in lines 38–47.

3. What should you judge, from his remark in line 56, to be the feeling of Horatio about the fate of the two courtiers?

4. Is Hamlet's rejoinder (57–62) an excuse or an explanation?

5. You will note that Hamlet asks Horatio if it is not perfectly right to take vengeance on the King, and that Horatio makes an evasive reply (63–72). How do you account for this?

6. From the lines 63 to 74 should you say that Hamlet had formed any definite plan of revenge?

7. Comment upon Hamlet's remark: "I'll court his favors."

8. What is Hamlet's idea in making fun of Osric?

9. Does Osric seem to be an impossible character? Have you ever known any one who resembles him in any respects?

10. What is the dramatic value of the whole interlude?

11. Do you think that Hamlet has any foreboding of his fate?

12. Is Hamlet sincere in his apology to Laertes? Laertes in his reply?

13. Make a plan of the stage setting for the duel scene.

14. Do you see any sign of compunction in Laertes for the treacherous part he is about to play?

15. What is the best way to effect the change of rapiers so that it will appear natural on the stage?

16. Is the death of the Queen necessary from a dramatic point of view?

17. Has Hamlet any suspicion, throughout the duel, of the plot against his life? If not, at what point does he realize the truth?

18. Can you explain why Horatio wishes to die with Hamlet?

19. Write a note on the following lines:

> If thou didst ever hold me in thy heart,
> Absent thee from felicity awhile,
> And in this harsh world draw thy breath in pain,
> To tell my story.

20. Set the stage for the entrance of Fortinbras.

21. In the first Act one of the characters said: "Something is rotten in the state of Denmark." What glimpses of restored order and harmony are given at the end of the play?

22. Was the vengeance of Hamlet accomplished through force of circumstances, or by deliberate planning on his part? In either case, how does the outcome illustrate his character?

SUBJECTS FOR ORAL AND WRITTEN COMPOSITION

1. Shakespeare's Methods of Opening His Plays.

[Study the first scenes in several plays — "Hamlet," "Macbeth," and "The Merchant of Venice," for instance. In what respects do these scenes form effective introductions to the respective plays?]

2. Shakespeare's Skill in Character-Drawing.

[What means does Shakespeare use to make his characters life-like? Look up passages that especially reveal the true personalities of Ophelia, Polonius, the King, etc.]

3. The Minor Characters of the Play.

[Discuss the parts played by Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, Marcellus, the First Clown, and Osric. Show how, though minor characters, they stand out clearly and are necessary to the plot.]

4. References to the Bible in "Hamlet."

[Make a collection of all references to the Bible in the play. Note the circumstances and character of each. What conclusion do you draw as to Shakespeare's knowledge and use of the scriptures?]

5. References to Mythology in "Hamlet."

[Treat this subject similarly to the above topic.]

6. My Favorite Passages in "Hamlet."

[Quote several and give reasons for your choice.]

7. Less Important Scenes of the Play.

[Imagine yourself a stage manager, and decide what scenes you would omit in your presentation of the play. Give reasons for such omissions.]

Subjects for Composition.

8. A Character Sketch of Horatio.

[Remember what Hamlet says to him in III. 2. 51–71. Find other passages which seem to indicate his personality.]

9. The Ending of the Play.

[Explain why the conclusion is satisfactory to you, or give suggestions for a different ending. Would it be possible, for instance, to have Hamlet triumph over his enemies and live? In other words, would you prefer a "happy" ending?]

10. Explain What Is Meant by "Dramatic Relief."

[Illustrate by reference to scenes in I, II, III, and V.]

11. Make a "Time-Analysis" of the Play.

[What intervals ought to be allowed between the scenes and acts? What is the duration of the whole play?]

12. Shakespeare's Use of Prose.

[In the prose scenes either (*a*) the subject matter presents a marked contrast to that of the scenes that precede and follow, or (*b*) the tone of the scene is on a lower plane than that of the poetical scenes.]

13. The Society Portrayed in the Play.

[Does it represent an age of rude and untamed energies, as in "Macbeth"? Or a contrast between aristocracy and common people, as in "Julius Cæsar"? Or an age of affectation and corrupt manners?]

14. Hamlet as a Man of Action.

[Are we too prone to regard him as a thinker only — a mere dreamer? Look at another side of his character, as revealed in the play. He is the first to board the pirate ship; he works out instantly a definite plan of revenge upon Rosencrantz and Guildenstern. Later, he saves Horatio by snatching away the poisoned drink; and by giving his "dying voice" for Fortinbras, he saves his country.]

15. Compare Hamlet and Brutus.

[They are said to have the following attribute in common: a tendency to philosophize; high moral ideas, coupled with unfitness for prompt and vigorous action. What do you think?]

16. Does Hamlet Stand Entirely Alone in the Play?

[Can he trust to Ophelia in any emergency? Is his mother of any assistance to him? How far can he rely upon Horatio for advice and comfort?]

17. The Vengeance of Hamlet.

[What opportunities arise for him to execute his plans of revenge? What plans has he? How does he meet these opportunities? What light is thus thrown upon his character?]

18. Was Hamlet Really Mad?

[This question opens one of the most fruitful sources of discussion in the whole play. What is your own opinion after a careful reading of the play? If it was real, how does he get such "method in his madness," as Polonius says? If it was assumed, what is his object in the pretense?]

19. The Personality of Hamlet.

[Below are given three different views, by three famous critics. Read them carefully. Select the one which most nearly conforms to your own opinion and use it as basis for your theme.]

"Hamlet does all that can be expected of the ideal hero of romance, but his task is impossible. He is slow to find a way because no way is to be found. Claudius is all-powerful and strongly entrenched and Hamlet has no evidence. The play is not the tragedy of inefficiency, but of heroic endeavor in the face of insuperable obstacles." — WERDER.

"A simple act is required . . . an act which a narrower man might perform straightway; but in Hamlet's mind such illimitable vistas of speculation are opened up that his will shrinks be-

fore them. Though recognizing his plain duty, and though feverishly eager to do it, he cannot force himself to action. Thus he fritters time away in reflection and introspection, till at last he himself is involved in ruin, and dies the victim of his own paralysis." — COLERIDGE.

"Hamlet is as little of the hero as a man can well be; but he is a young and princely novice, full of high enthusiasm and quick sensibility. It is not from any want of attachment to his father or abhorrence of his murder that Hamlet is dilatory, but it is more to his taste to indulge his imagination in reflecting on the enormity of the crime and refining on his schemes of vengeance, than to put them into immediate practice." — HAZLITT.

20. Ophelia.

[Is her nature deep or shallow? If she really loves Hamlet, why does she lie to him (III. 1. 130–131)? What causes her mind to become unhinged?]

21. The Relations between Hamlet and Polonius.

[Why does Hamlet dislike him? What does he think of Hamlet? How does Hamlet "try him out" (II. 2, III. 2)?]

22. Polonius on the Stage.

[How should his part be acted? Describe what you think should be his make-up, voice, manner of walking, gestures.]

23. The King.

[Discuss his character, using the following suggestions:

a. State-craft: opening speech, dealings with Norway.

b. Tactics against Hamlet: early favor, changing in the course of the Play to cunning villainy (I. 2. 117, IV. 7. 128–162).

c. Self-deception: temporizing with his conscience (III. 3).

d. Skill in dealing with Laertes (IV. 5, 7).]

24. The Queen.

[Is there evidence that she shared in the guilt of the King? (I. 5, III. 2, III. 4.)

Has she a real affection for her son? (III. 4, IV. 1, IV. 7. 11–12, V. 2. 302–303.)]

25. Hamlet's Friendship for Horatio.

[How do you account for the deep affection between the two? Hunt up the various occasions in the play in which they are together and base your conclusions on what you find.]

26. Compare Claudius and Macbeth.

[This is an interesting topic for those who have read both "Hamlet" and "Macbeth." Claudius is the more subtle of the two, and his scheming and plotting are in strong contrast to the rude and heedless force of Macbeth.]

27. The Grave-diggers and the Porter.

[Compare the Grave-diggers' Scene in "Hamlet" (V. 1) with the Porter Scene in "Macbeth" (II. 3, first part). Try to show the serious purpose served by each in developing the action of the play, as well as its grim humor.]

28. Speeches That Reveal Character.

[Shakespeare shows the development of his characters by what they say and by what other people say about them. Bearing this in mind, select groups of speeches which seem to you to indicate the personality of some of the characters.]

29. The Structure of the Play.

["Hamlet," as you will have noticed, moves according to a definite plan. We have, first, the *Introduction*, where the tragic note is struck by the evident nervousness and anxiety of the soldiers and by the entry of the Ghost; we learn that "something is rotten in the state of Denmark." Next come the *Complication*, the *Climax*, the *Resolution*, and the *Catastrophe*. The complicating action includes the theory of Polonius as to Hamlet's madness; the plan of Hamlet to test the King's conscience by the play; the spying of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern. The Climax is reached when Hamlet's test proves successful and "the king rises"; it includes also the death of Polonius. The Resolution (the clearing up of the Complication) shows the beginning of the end: Hamlet and Fortinbras on their respective ways; the appearance of Laertes, the return of

Hamlet, and the new plot against him; the Grave-diggers' scene. The Catastrophe includes the duel, when the entanglement is completely ended and there is a glimpse of better times for Denmark.

Compose a theme with these facts in mind. The following will serve for topics of the main subject:

The Opening of the Play — indications as to its probable nature.
The appearance of the Ghost and the revelations to Hamlet.
The theory at Court as to Hamlet's madness.
The coming of the Players.
The Play (Act III).
Hamlet's failure to kill the King.
The King's plot against Hamlet and the latter's departure for England.
Laertes and the King; the return of Hamlet.
The duel.]

30. Shakespeare's Opinions.

[Can you find, in "Hamlet" and other plays that you have read, any indications of what Shakespeare himself thought on various subjects? For instance, in "Julius Cæsar" there are some very uncomplimentary references to the "rabblement," or mob (I. 2. 215–290); in "The Merchant of Venice" Arragon speaks of "common spirits" and the "barbarous multitudes" and the "fool multitude." Does Shakespeare put his own thoughts into the mouths of his characters?

A certain poet, speaking of Shakespeare's sonnets, says:

With this key
Shakespeare unlocked his heart.

Another poet replies:

Did Shakespeare? if so, the less Shakespeare he!

Read some of the sonnets,[1] and see with which of the two poets you agree. Choose, for example, XXIX, XXX, XXXII, LVII, LX, LXIV, LXV, LXVI, LXXIII, XCIV, CIV, CVI, CIX, CX, CXVI. These are generally considered to be the best of the Shakespeare sonnets. Do you find in them a more personal note than in the plays?

[1] See pages 211–212.

IMAGINATIVE SUBJECTS

[The following subjects call for imagination and originality as well as knowledge of the play itself. Some of them may be told in the first person in the form of a letter or journal. Others may well be written in dialogue, or as a short one-act play, which may then be presented by members of the class. In all of them, start with the facts and suggestions given by Shakespeare. Then use your imagination freely, though what you imagine should always be possible and the more probable the better.]

31. Hamlet at the University of Wittemberg.

[How would he employ his leisure? What studies would appeal to him? What would his friends be like? Horatio, Rosencrantz, and Guildenstern were his fellow students — what would have been his relations with them?]

32. The Story of How They Did It.

[Describe the murder of Hamlet's father. Decide, from examination of evidence in the play, whether or not the Queen had anything to do with the actual murder.]

33. A Day with Laertes in Paris.

[You can make a very interesting theme by looking up information about life in Paris at the date of the play.]

34. Ophelia Writes to Laertes.

[Try to imagine the sort of letter she would write. She is affectionate, and she has a keen sense of humor (see I. 3. 45–51). Would she mention Hamlet?]

35. Polonius at Home.

[What would he do, and what would he talk about in his own home — free from the cares and artificialities of Court life? Remember that both Laertes and Ophelia are very respectful to him, despite the peculiarities which make us smile.]

Subjects for Composition.

36. Talking over Hamlet.

[Write, in dialogue form, the conversation between Rosencrantz and Guildenstern after the King has commissioned them to spy on Hamlet. As we see them in the play, neither possesses much strength of character. What sort of plan do you suppose they would concoct?]

37. The Fight with the Pirates.

[Tell the story of the fight which Hamlet refers to in his letter (IV. 6. 12–30). Explain how he happened to gain the goodwill of the pirates.]

38. Rosencrantz and Guildenstern "Go to It."

[An account of the events following the escape of Hamlet from the ship. Tell how Rosencrantz and Guildenstern arrived in England with the altered letter, and what happened to them there.]

39. "Poor Yorick."

[Read Hamlet's half pathetic and half affectionate remarks about Yorick (V. 1. 183–194). Then imagine Hamlet as a child, playing with the Court Jester.]

40. The Grave-diggers Dig Four Other Graves.

[A difficult theme subject. Can you imagine their conversation as they prepared the graves for Hamlet and the three others? Read over carefully the first part of Act V.]

41. Horatio Tells Fortinbras the Story of Hamlet.

[Read again V. 2. 332–342, 372–379, and tell the story as you imagine it would be told by Hamlet's best friend. Use dialogue form. In which portions of Horatio's story would Fortinbras be most interested?]

42. "My Switzers."

[See IV. 5. 80. Hunt up references to the Swiss Guard in history. Write a theme embodying what you find, with special reference to "The Lion of Lucerne."]

43. Shakespeare's Political Tendencies.

[Can you find any evidence as to his personal opinions in the plays that you have read? Is he more interested in noble personages, or in the "common people"?

The following scenes portray two types of character — the "rustic," and the well-bred and educated. Which of the two types seems to you the more lifelike? Disregard the fact that the "noble" personages speak in blank verse, and try to grasp the character-drawing.

"A Midsummer Night's Dream," I. 2; III. 1. 1–78.

"The Merchant of Venice," I. 1. 56–104.

"Macbeth," II. 1. 1–64.

"Julius Cæsar," I. 1. 215–290; II. 1. 1–85; III. 2, 3.

44. Some of Shakespeare's "Fools."

[Write a theme comparing or contrasting the "Fools" in any plays with which you are familiar. You may consider, for example, the First Clown in "Hamlet," Touchstone in "As You Like It," Launcelot Gobbo in "The Merchant of Venice," the Porter in "Macbeth," the Cobbler in "Julius Cæsar," Feste in "Twelfth Night."]

GLOSSARY OF DIFFICULT OR UNUSUAL WORDS

The words are brought together here for the convenience of the student. Most of them are discussed more fully in the Notes.

absolute: precise.
abstract: summary, epitome.
abuse: deception.
access: approach.
addition: reputation.
admiration: astonishment.
advanced: successful.
aery: eagle's or hawk's nest.
affection: passion.
affront: meet directly, confront.
against: just before.
aim: guess.
amiss: mischief.
anchor: hermit.
annexment: appendage.
anon: suddenly.
answered: explained.
antic: foolish, fantastic.
appointment: equipment.
apprehension: perception, understanding.
apt: quick, ready.
argal: clown-Latin for *ergo*, therefore.
argument: subject.
arras: tapestry.
arrests: legal restraints.
article: (1) document, I. 1. 94; (2) value, V. 2. 117.
aspect: appearance.
assay: (1) proof, trial, II. 2. 71; (2) tempt, III. 1. 14.
assigns: accompaniments.
assume: acquire.
assurance: security.
attribute: reputation.
audit: final account.
avouch: proof, testimony.

barred: excluded, failed to consult.
barren: foolish.
beaver: face-guard of a helmet.
beetle: hang over.
bent: inclination.
bespeak: address.
bestowed: lodged, placed.
beteem: allow.
bias: inclination to one side.
bilboes: iron fetters, used on board ship.
bisson: blinding.
blank: blanch.
blazon: proclamation.

blench: start.
board: speak to, accost.
bodkin: small dagger.
bound: ready, prepared.
bourne: boundary.
brainish: brain-sick.
bravery: ostentation, bravado.
brazed: hardened.
breathing: whispering.
broad: unrestrained.
brokers: go-betweens, negotiators.
bruit: noise abroad.
bugs: bugbears, terrors.
buttons: buds.
buzzers: whisperers, talebearers.

candied: sugared, flattering.
canker: canker-worm, that destroys buds.
canon: divine law.
canonized: buried with the rites of the church.
capable: (1) able to receive, III. 2. 11; (2) susceptible, III. 4. 125.
cap-a-pe: from head to foot.
capital: important.
card. directory, index, guide.
carriage: purport.
cast: (1) surface coloring, III. 1. 85; (2) "cast beyond": be oversuspicious, II 1. 112.
cataplasm: poultice, plaster.
cautel: craft, wile.
cease: death.
censure: opinion.
cerements: graveclothes, shroud.
chapless: lacking the lower jaw.
character: (1) inscribe, I. 3. 59; (2) handwriting, IV. 7. 51.
charge: expense.
check: leave its proper prey to follow another.
cheer: fare.
choler: anger.
chopfallen: "down in the mouth."
chopine: a kind of shoe with a thick sole.
churlish: harsh, rude.
circumstance: circumlocution, detail.
clepe: call, name.
climatures: regions, country.
closely: privately, secretly.
closet: private apartment.
coil: turmoil, trouble.
collateral: indirect.
color: give excuse for.
commerce: intercourse.
complexion: temperament, disposition.
conceit: thought, imagination.
concernancy: meaning, point.
conclusion: experiment.
condolement: mourning.
congrue: agree.
conjunctive: closely united.
conjure: beg, implore.
conscience: knowledge.

consonancy: agreement.
constantly: steadily, firmly.
contagion: poison.
continent: that which contains.
contraction: marriage contract.
contriving: plotting.
contumely: insult.
conversation: intercourse.
coted: passed by, outstripped.
couch: hide.
count: accounting, trial.
counter: in the wrong direction.
cozen: cheat.
crants: garlands for a maiden's funeral.
crowner: coroner.
cry: pack (of hounds), company.
cue: hint, motive.
curb: bend, bow.
curiously: fancifully.

dally: waste time.
dear: used of anything that touches deeply.
defeat: destruction.
defeated. marred, disfigured.
delate: convey, intrust.
delivered: told, narrated.
delver: digger.
denote: mark, portray.
differences: personal qualities.
dire: deadly.
disappointed: unprepared.
disclose: outcome.
discovery: disclosure.
dispatched: deprived.
distemper: disorder.
distilled: transformed.
distract: distraught, deranged.
document: lesson.
dole: grief.
douts: extinguishes.
down-gyved: hanging like fetters.
drossy: mixed with impurities.

eager: biting, sharp.
ecstasy: excitement, madness.
effects: actions.
eisel: vinegar.
emulate: jealous.
enactures: resolutions, enactments.
encumbered: folded.
entreatment: conversation, interview.
envious: evil.
escoted: paid.
espials: spies.
eterne: eternal.
even: (1) plain, honest, II. 2. 282; (2) fellow, V. 1. 28.
exception: dislike.
excrement: hair.
expostulate: converse, expound.
express: exact, well-formed.
extent: behavior.
extravagant: wandering beyond confines.
eyases: unfledged hawks, nestlings.

faculty: ability.
falls: happens, falls out.
fantasy: imagination.
fardels: burdens.
farm: rent.
fashion: form.
favor: (1) attractiveness, IV. 5. 170; (2) look, appearance, V. 1. 193.
fay: faith.
fee: land held as private property.
feelingly: with insight.
fell: cruel.
fellies: pieces making the rim of a wheel.
fetch: stratagem.
flaw: gust of wind.
flourishes: ornaments.
flush: self-confident.
flushing: redness.
followed: popular.
fond: foolish.
fordo: destroy.
forgery: imagination, invention.
free: innocent.
fretted: adorned, ornamented.
function: bodily activity.
fust: grow moldy.

gain-giving: misgiving.
gait: proceeding, advance.
garb: outward fashion.
gentry: courtesy
german: akin.
gib: tom-cat.
gorge: stomach.
grace: honor.
gracious: blessed, benign.
green: inexperienced, foolish.
gross: obvious.
grunt: groan.
gules: red.
gulf: whirlpool.
gyves: fetters.

happily: perhaps.
harbinger: forerunner.
hatchment: coat of arms hung up as a sign of the death of the owner.
haunt: publicity, company.
head: armed force.
health: welfare.
heat: anger.
heavy: sad.
hectic: fever.
hedge: encompass, protect.
hent: grip.
heraldry: designs.
heyday: wildness, wantonness.
honest: pure.
hoodman blind: blindman's buff.
hugger-mugger: secrecy.
humor: disposition.
husbandry: thrift.

impartment: communication.
impasted: made into a paste.
implorators: solicitors.
imponed: staked, wagered.

imposthume: abscess.
impress: forced labor, impressment.
incapable: unable to understand.
incorrect: unsubmissive.
index: prologue.
indifferent: ordinary, average.
indued: suited, adapted to.
infected: poisoned.
infusion: essential qualities.
ingenious: intelligent.
inheritor: possessor.
inhibition: prohibition, restraint by law.
inoculate: graft.
instances: motives, inducements.
inurned: buried.
investments: garments.

jealous: suspicious.
jig: comic ballad.
jocund: joyous.
jowls: knocks about.
jumpy: exactly, precisely.

keep: dwell.
kettle: kettle-drum.
kibe: chilblain.
kindless: unnatural.

larded: garnished.
lazar-like: like a leper.
lenten: meager.
lets: hinders.
levies: lists, muster-rolls.
liberal: free-spoken.
liegemen: followers, retainers.
lightness: lightheadedness.
limed: caught, as with bird lime.
list: (1) number, I. 1. 98; (2) border, IV. 5. 82.
loggats: a game in which small logs are thrown at a "jack."

main: (1) chief cause, II. 2. 56; (2) chief power, IV. 4. 15.
mained: incomplete, shortened.
mart: traffic.
matin: morning.
mazzard: head, skull.
meet: fitting, proper.
merely: entirely.
miching: secret.
milch: soft.
mobled: muffled up.
model: copy.
modesties: reservations, simplicities.
moiety: portion.
mole: blemish.
mountebank: quack-doctor.
mows: grimaces.
muddied: thick and unwholesome.
muddy-mettled: irresolute, sluggish.
murdering-piece: cannon for firing case-shot.
mute: silent actors.
mutines: mutineers.

naked: unarmed.
napkin: handkerchief.
native. kindred, related.
nature: natural affection.
nave: hub, center.
nerve: muscle, sinew.
noyance: harm, injury.

obsequious: funereal.
occulted: concealed, hidden.
occurrents: occurrences, events.
o'er-raught: overtook.
o'erreaches: gets the better of, outwits.
o'ersized: smeared over, as with glue.
omen: fatal sign.
opened: revealed.
operant: active.
opposed: opponent.
opposite: (1) obstacle, III. 2. 204; (2) opponent, V. 2. 62.
ordinant: ruling, guiding.
ordnance: cannon.
organ: means, instrument.
orisons: prayers.
ostentation: pageant.

packing: going off in a hurry.
paddock: toad.
pajock: peacock.
pall: prove useless.
palmy: glorious.
pardon: leave to depart.
parle: parley, conference.
partisan: long spear, halberd.
parts: qualities, attainments.
pass: thrust.
passage: death.
passion: strong feeling.
pate: head.
peak: mope, be irresolute.
peculiar: individual.
perpend: ponder.
petar: bomb.
picked: refined, dainty.
pioner: military engineer, sapper.
pith: importance.
plausive: plausible.
play: fence.
plurisy: fullness of blood.
politic: statesmanlike.
politician: plotter, schemer.
porpentine: porcupine.
possit: thicken, curdle.
posy: motto on a ring.
practises: plots, stratagems.
precurse: omen, warning.
pregnant: quick, ready.
prenominate: before-mentioned.
present: immediate.
pressures: impressions.
primy: spring-like.
probation: proof.
process: course of events.
progress: royal journey in state.
pronounce: speak on.
proof: trial.
property: quality.
proposer: orator. speaker.
pursy: pampered.

push: test.
put on: (1) told to, I. 3. 94; (2) set on, IV. 7. 131, V. 2. 376; (3) tested, V. 2. 390.

quaintly: artfully, cleverly.
quality: actor's profession.
quarry: game killed.
question: conversation.
questionable: inviting discussion.
quick: alive.
quiddities: subtleties.
quietus: a quittance given on settling an account.
quillets: frivolous distinctions.
quit: requite.
quoted: noted, marked.

rack: mass of clouds.
range: roam freely.
ravel: loosen.
razed: slashed open.
reck: care for, mind.
recorder: a kind of flute.
rede: counsel, advice.
reechy: stinking.
region: air.
relative: pertinent, to the point.
relish: smack.
replication: reply.
requiem: hymn for the dead.
retrograde: contrary.
rivals: partners, associates.
robustious: sturdy.
romage: bustle, turmoil.
rood: cross.
round: plain-spoken.
rouse: deep draught.
row: stanza, verse.
rub: obstacle (in bowling).
ruled: listen to reason.

sable: (1) black, I. 2. 241, II. 2. 442; (2) sable fur, IV. 7. 80, III. 2. 117.
sallets: spiciness, indecencies.
sanctuarize: protect.
sans: without.
sate: satisfy.
saws: maxims, wise sayings.
'Sblood: by God's blood.
scarfed: flung on like a scarf.
sconce: (1) head, V. 1. 100; (2) conceal, III. 4. 4.
scrimer: fencer.
season: (1) temper, qualify, I. 2. 191, II. 1. 28; (2) ripen, I. 3. 81, III. 2. 192, III. 3. 86.
secure: unsuspicious, careless.
seized of: possessed of.
sensible: able to be perceived by the senses.
sensibly: keenly, feelingly.
shark up: pick up anyhow.
shent: put to shame.
shrewdly: keenly, bitterly.
siege: rank, position.
simple: silly, weak.
simples: medicinal herbs.
sith: since.
sledded: riding on sleds.
sore: heavy, grievous.

spill: destroy.
splenitive: passionate, hot-tempered.
springes: snares.
station: attitude, pose.
statist: statesman.
sterling: sound currency.
still: always, constantly.
stithy: anvil, forge.
stomach: courage, resolution.
stoup: drinking-vessel, flagon.
straight: at once.
strike: exert evil influence.
stuck: thrust.
sudden: unprepared.
suit: request.
supervise: looking over, reading.
suppliance: amusement, entertainment.
swounds: swoons, faints.

table: memorandum tablet.
take: infect, bewitch.
target: shield.
tarre: set on to fight (like dogs).
tend: wait.
tender: (1) offer, I. 3. 99, 103, 106; (2) show, I. 3. 109; (3) take care of, I. 3. 107, IV. 3. 41.
tenders: promises.
tent: probe, search.
tetter: thickening of the skin.
thought: melancholy, brooding.
tickle: easily moved.
tithe: tenth.
topped: surpassed.
touches: implicates.
toward: at hand, in preparation.
toy: (1) fancy, freak, I. 4. 75; (2) trifle, IV. 5. 18.
trick: (1) adorn, II. 2. 447; (2) trifle, IV. 4. 61; (3) habit, IV. 7. 187.
tropically: metaphorically.
truant: roving, wandering.
truepenny: honest fellow.
tyrannically: extravagantly, vehemently.

umbrage: shadow.
unaneled: without extreme unction.
unbated: not blunted.
uncharge: fail to accuse.
unction: ointment.
unfold: reveal, disclose.
unhouselled: without the Sacrament.
union: a fine pearl.
unkennel: disclose.
unpregnant of: unquickened by, indifferent to.
unreclaimed: untamed.
unsifted: untried.
unvalued: without high rank.
use: habit, custom.

vailed: lowered, downcast.
valanced: fringed (with a beard).
validity: value, effect.

vantage: favorable opportunity.
vast: waste, void.
ventages: windholes, stops.
virtue: power, efficiency.
voice: vote.

wake: revel by night.
wann'd: paled.
wanton: spoiled child.
warrantise: warrant, guarantee.
wassail: revelry.
watch: wakefulness.
weal: welfare, safety.
weeds: garments.
wharf: bank.
whisper: rumor, report.
wholesome: sane.
windlasses: windings, subtle stratagems.
wit: wisdom.

yaw: stagger.
yesty: frothy.